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SHORT STORIES

A WEEKLY MAGAZINE FOR HOME AND TRAIN

No. 592. FOR WEEK ENDING MAY 5TH, 1900. [ONE PENNY.

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SHORT STORIES

No. 952.] For the Week Ending May 5th, 1900. [PRICE ONE PENNY.

A MODERN DON JUAN.

"No, I don't exactly hate him—and yet, I do. It was a mean, shabby trick to play on any fellow. 'Pon my word, some men are as spiteful as girls!" soliloquised John Heathcote as he shook his head at a letter he had just received, which contained the news that he was refused the membership of a club, and although the source was not stated, he knew by whom the ball had been set rolling that had caused his name to be scratched off the members' list.

"H'm," he continued, as he lit a cigarette. "Fancy bearing a grudge all these years. Why, we were boys together, when little Effie Mathews left him for me. Oh, how wild he was! It wasn't my fault after all, was it?" and he appealed to the miniature of a fair-haired girl hanging over his mantelpiece.

The fair-haired girl was now the wife of a country curate and overseer of the fortnightly Sewing Bee, but she had been Effie Mathews when John painted the miniature of her, for though by profession a young officer in Her Majesty's Navy, he had a turn for art, which took the form of miniature painting.

John Heathcote long ago nicknamed Don Juan on account of his numerous *amours*, was one who was either too lazy or too careless to quarrel with destiny.

"What must be, must be," he used always to say. If he fell in love with every pretty face he met, was it his fault? If the owners of the said pretty faces, and the owners of plain ones also, fell in love with him, was it his fault? Wherever he went—and he went to a good many places—it was the same.

If Don Juan lived for more than a month in any one spot of the globe there were tears and lamentations on one side and vows of undying constancy on the other. And yet he was only twenty, and most of the girls, whose letters filled his desk and whose photographs his rooms, were older than himself. It was therefore their faults—not his. At least so his lady friends said, his male aquaintances, and their name was legion, for Juan was bound to make friends wherever he went, were of the opinion that he was "a jolly good sort, but an abomination where the girls were."

He attracted them like jam attracts the flies, and let it be understood, they attracted him like flowers allure a butterfly.

He was the son of a lord—that attracted some.

He was well off—that attracted more.

He was very good looking—that attracted most.

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And his unfailing good humour and sweet obliging nature was almost proverbial.

No man ever asked Juan for assistance twice, either pecuniary or otherwise, and no woman could ever say she had met a refusal from him, from fetching another man's letters from the post office to taking a forlorn damsel out for a whole day on the river—because she wished to avoid meeting someone else.

There was only one time in his life that worried him, and that was when it came to saying good-bye to them all, before he rejoined his ship.

This was a trying time always to Don Juan, and he shook his head over the row of photographs for the second time that day, as he realised that one of those periodical partings was swiftly approaching.

"I must really think out a good plan this time," he said musingly. "I shall be worn to a shadow if I have to part separately with them all. I wonder——"

But his meditations were cut short by the opening of his door to admit a tall, fair young man, perhaps a year or so older than himself.

With a hasty exclamation of surprise, Don Juan rose to greet his visitor, first, however, throwing the letter he had just received into the fireplace.

"Hullo, old chap, where did you spring from?" he said as they shook hands.

"So it is you!" was his answer.

"I have been staying over at Highlands with the McGregor's for the past eight weeks, and lately I began to see signs of trouble that I always associated with you, and so I circulated inquiries, and you see I am right!" replied his visitor, helping himself from a box of cigarettes.

Don Juan laughed good-humouredly.

"Signs of trouble?" he repeated. "I like that! What did you see? Quaking bogs opening suddenly or strange volcanic upheavals on the mainland?"

"Two girls, my cousins, both engaged to be married, have been staying up at Highlands, and both the fellows are thirsting for your life. I heard the postmaster giving his daughter a good lecture because she is always out and not attending to business; and several other things which all point towards you."

"All roads lead to Earl's Court," said Don Juan, lying back in his chair. "But touching your cousins; I had no idea that they were your cousins, that, I'll swear was an accident. I was half asleep in my canoe and her

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head had gone out into the stream. Two girls in a skiff, not seeing me—you know yourself girls always row and steer in the most odd manner—bumped me nearly into next week. I rose to remonstrate and saw two very pretty women——"

"Yes, and I can guess the rest," interposed Algernon le Hay, with a smile, that was not a very pleasant one.

"As you say, you can guess the rest," said Don Juan, raising his brown eyes to his friend's blue ones, and he mentally added: "You haven't forgiven me for Effie Mathews yet—but it was a shabby trick!"

"When do you sail?" asked Le Hay, after a pause, during which he had been making a tour of the other's cosily furnished room.

"On the 22nd—I haven't got more than a fortnight."

"And how many broken hearts will you leave behind this time—all these?" indicating the numerous photographs on the mantelpiece.

"I hope not, the weight of all those would overturn the ship."

"Ah, you are a bad lot—I'm not like you. Thank goodness I was never gone on any girl but the one I am engaged to."

Don Juan raised his eyebrows.

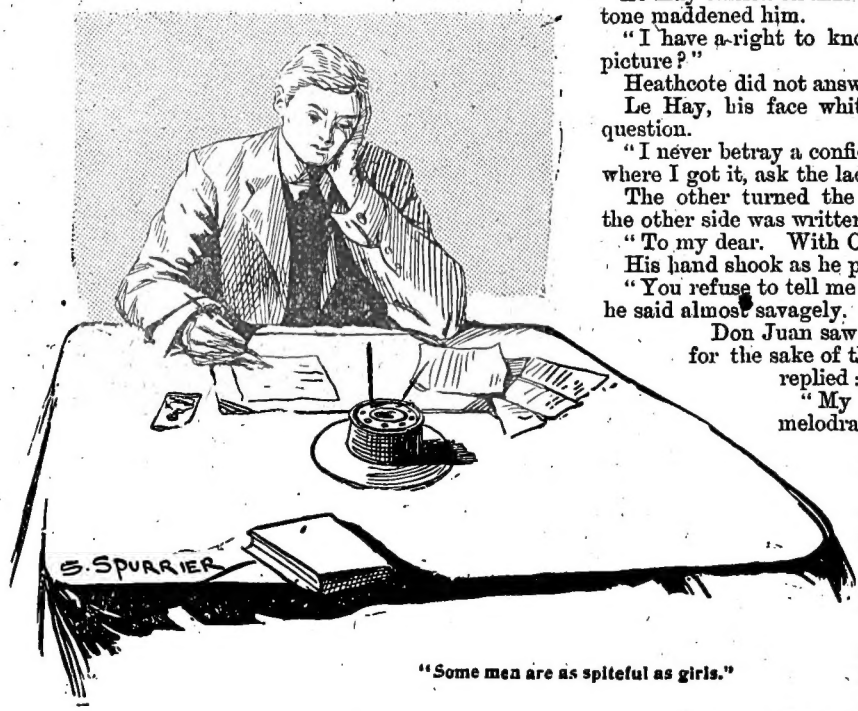
"You've forgotten Effie Mathews then," he said slyly.

The other's face darkened, but he continued:

"Yes, I've got the sweetest and best girl in the world, and she is devoted to me—not even you could move her!"

"I hope not, old fellow," said Don Juan, smiling at the rather savage glance the other shot at him from under his light eyebrows.

"No, by Jove! I should like you to meet her. She's awfully pretty, and it would be a take-down for you to meet a lovely woman who wouldn't look at you!"



"Some men are as spiteful as girls."

Juan felt an unaccountable sensation, not to say desire, rise in his heart to meet this unknown fair one.

"You think I need a take down, then?" he asked lazily.

"I know you do. You're too confoundedly conceited for anything," which was an untruth.

"Thanks, old chap. It will please you to hear I have just been elected a member of your club."

Le Hay turned suddenly.

"That you have not!" he said hotly. "I saw to——"

And he stopped, seeing he had made a slip.

Don Juan looked at him and smiled.

"Yes, I guessed who did it."

Le Hay stammered something about doing his best, but ill-feeling among some of the members, but Don Juan's quiet smile stopped him and there was an uncomfortable pause.

The visitor, to change the conversation, took up one or two of the pictures on the mantelpiece and read the various inscriptions under them.

There were professional beauties, and society beauties, beauties of title and beauties of fame, and there were photographs with neither name or message on them.

Suddenly Heathcote was aroused from his thoughts by a quick exclamation and an oath.

He looked up to see Le Hay white with anger looking at a photo which had been behind the others.

"Where the devil did this come from?" he demanded.

"Out of the shop, my boy," replied the other calmly.

"Don't be a fool; where did you get it?"

Don Juan raised his eyebrows ever so slightly, a trick he was fond of when he was annoyed.

"I really don't see how it can interest you."

"Well, it does; I know this lady."

"She'd be honoured if she saw your face this moment; you look the jealous lover to the life."

Le Hay turned on him with a snarl, the other's smooth tone maddened him.

"I have a right to know. Where did you get this picture?"

Heathcote did not answer.

Le Hay, his face white with passion, repeated the question.

"I never betray a confidence. If you wish to know where I got it, ask the lady yourself."

The other turned the piece of cardboard round; on the other side was written in violet ink:

"To my dear. With Clarice's love."

His hand shook as he put it down.

"You refuse to tell me anything about that picture?" he said almost savagely.

Don Juan saw he was in earnest, and more for the sake of the girl than for his friend, he replied:

"My dear chap, we are not in a melodrama. What has upset you over the photo? Tell me, are you fond of the girl, or——"

"Don't speak like that. I am devoted to her, and she is my affianced wife!"

Don Juan whistled, and his brown eyes grew bright at once. Here were complications.

"And you're as jealous as can be! I can see that. I pity you if you marry her. She's a dear little girl, but a flirt!"

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Le Hay ground his teeth. It maddened his selfish and morose temper to hear the girl spoken of in this way.

"How long have you known her?"

"Pardon my putting a question on top of yours: how long have you been engaged?"

"Five weeks."

"H'm! Just at the time I met her. She told me she l——" and he paused.

Le Hay's blue eyes dilated with passion, at the other's slow musical voice.

"No wonder I hate you," he said. "But wait! I'll have it out with her before to-night."

"Take my advice, old chap, and don't try and ride the high horse with her. I have known her as long as you nearly, and know her a good deal better perhaps, having given the sex more attention. She has got a spirit of her own, she's proved it I think, and if you are as fond of her as you say, be careful and don't get her temper up. You'll regret it if you do."

"Regret be hanged! I'll see this matter through and if I find you're at the bottom of it, I shall come back and give you a horse-whipping!" cried Le Hay, striding to the door.

"Charmed I'm sure!" replied Don Juan, showing his white teeth. "Hadn't we better take it for granted that it is my fault, and start horse-whipping now? A man like you is as likely to thrash a woman as a man—more perhaps!"

Le Hay gave him an evil glance and muttering something about "Confounded puppy!" left the room, shutting the door violently.

"The sooner I get to sea the better, I think," mused the sole occupier of the room. "Trouble and I are never far apart," and he took up the photograph of Clarice and looked long at the laughing, mischievous violet eyes, and the proud, red lips set in a wicked little smile.

"Taking two fellows on at once; it's rather good you know, Miss Clarice, when one thinks of it in a calm manner. You've got a nerve, and yet, I suppose I ought not to complain. Engaged a week and then me, and—the usual! I suppose I ought to consider it a compliment. Anyway I am even with him over that membership. Fate is kind!"

And sitting down at his desk he took out a pen and commenced writing a letter.

This occupied him some time, and it was not until he had made several erasures and drawn several freehand efforts with his pen on the blotting-paper, that at last he lifted his brown eyes with a sigh and said:

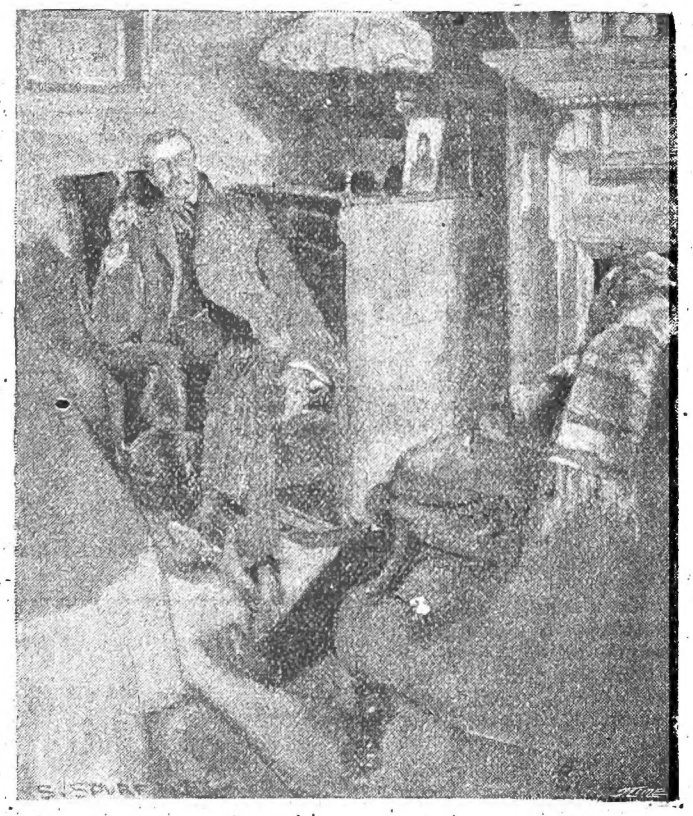
"That's over."

He had evidently quite forgotten the little affair of Le Hay for his handsome countenance wore its accustomed smile as he read aloud the letter he had penned.

It ran thus:

"DEAR ——,—I cannot go away without saying good-bye to you once more. It will be hard to part with you even then—in fact I don't know how I shall get through it. No doubt you will forget me when I am far away—but I hope not. Our friendship has been a very pleasant one—at least to me, so will you grant me one last favour, and meet me under the trees behind Garth's farm to-morrow at five?—Always yours, "JUAN."

"Yes, that will do for all of them," he said as he laid the sheet of paper on his desk.



"All roads lead to Earl's Court."

"It will take me some time to copy them all out, but still, it will be easier than writing a new letter to each," and he sat down to do so, and nothing was heard in the room but the ticking of the clock and the scratch of the pen.

"Ah," murmured Juan as he addressed one of the thirteen envelopes, "Miss Clarice Fernley, The Deaneries, Horsdon, near Headly. We'll soon see about Mr. Algernon Le Hay! If you have any spirit in you, you will answer my letter in person. If you are cowed by that *fiancé* of yours, you won't turn up. Ah well! there will be twelve others," and rising with a sigh Don Juan put on his hat and, whistling to his dog, strolled out of the room, his thirteen letters each addressed to a different young lady, in his pockets.

He laughed as he went down the street.

"Jove! What a time I shall have if they all come," he said.

* * * * *

The clock on the mantelpiece showed a quarter to five.

It was a magnificent afternoon and Heathcote was one of the few young men who was sitting indoors that day.

He was reading a book, stretched out on the couch and seemed in no particular hurry about anything.

Time went on, and the clock struck.

Don Juan raised his head, looked at the timepiece and smiled.

"One or two of them will be there already," he said, and went on reading.

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A quarter past five and he looked up again.

"Most of them will be there by now—I wonder what they will say to each other when they find I've asked them all?" and his eyes returned to his book again.

Another fifteen minutes passed, and then he closed the book with a yawn and went into the other room, from which he shortly emerged, looking handsomer than ever in a suit of grey flannel.

He carefully selected a pink carnation out of his landlady's garden and sauntered down the street.

"I wonder how many will have the patience to wait for me; not many, I know. Well I'm sorry for the others, but what *can* a fellow do with thirteen girls?" and he appealed to a reflection of himself in a passing tailor's shop.

It was striking six as the young gentleman, feeling, let it be known, not a spark of shame for his ungallant conduct, turned the corner by Garth's farm and surveyed the clump of trees that had been the tryst for thirteen damsels.

Not a petticoat was in sight!

"H'm, looks bad for me," soliloquised Don Juan. "Shall go to sea unencumbered after all, it seems—hullo! What's that?" as he caught sight of a white dress between the stems of the trees.

He hurried forward, walking softly on the grass so as to make no noise.

The occupant of the white dress, was sitting on a fallen oak tree and had her back to him.

Her hair was very fair and she wore a large white hat coquettishly trimmed with pink, and tied under her chin in a bow.

Don Juan recognised the sweet figure in a moment and whistled mentally.

"This is Fate! Only one girl waits for me out of thirteen, and that one is Le Hay's choice! Good evening, Miss Clarice, I am afraid I am very late," and with an easy grace he stepped over the tree trunk and sat beside her.

The girl started and then frowned. She made no answer, but taking out her watch, handed it to him.

Don Juan put on his most engaging smile.

"I know," he said, bending towards her so that she could see the admiration in his brown eyes.

"I have no excuse to offer, except—that I knew you would wait for me."

"What about the others then?" snapped Miss Fernley between her red lips.

"Oh, the others!" with an easy shrug. "Did you see any others?"

"Juan, how can you? There were twelve girls here at five o'clock, and they were in a terrible rage with you. They all went after a time. Several went as soon as a lot of others came along."

"But you waited," softly.

"Yes—for a particular reason," very decidedly.

Juan looked the picture of innocent inquiry.

"Don't look at me like that—you are the most deceitful boy in the county—and you've told him!"

"Who?"

"Algernon."

"I did not, dear. He found your photograph and wanted to know where I got it, and I told him to ask you."

The girl nodded her saucy little head.

"And he *did*—he raved like a madman and said a lot of horrid things about you, and dared me ever to speak to you again."

"That is why you are came to-day and waited an hour?"

"Yes," complacently. "I should have waited all night, because I was determined to let Algernon see I intended to do as I like. Oh, Juan; don't!"

For the impetuous young man had kissed her.

"Does he know where you are?"

"No, but I shall tell him when I get home—tell him all about the twelve other girls, and how you kept me waiting an hour!"

Don Juan lay back and laughed.

"I should like to see his face; but aren't you afraid of him—he has got an awful temper?"

"Afraid of Algy? Oh, no!" quite easily. "He won't say much to me, I fancy."

"Why?"

Clarice meditatively twisted a ring of diamonds round her finger.

"Because he'll get this back if he does. In fact, I have a good mind to give it him whether he says anything or not!"

A faint flush came to Clarice's face.

"If you had another to put in its place—would you?" with dangerous softness.

There was no answer.

"Would you take pity on a poor devil like me, and make me the proudest of men?"

The girl looked at him, a sudden softening in her eyes.

Don Juan slipped the ring of diamonds off,

"That fellow doesn't deserve you."

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and replaced it by a ring of rubies he had in his pocket.

"I didn't say 'Yes'!"

"Well, it will be a keepsake until I come back from China."

Clarice looked at the ring a moment, and then suddenly drew it off, replaced the diamonds, and put the rubies over it.

"You are his friend—and I love him a little, and he adores me. I will tell him you put the ruby ring over his to keep them safe," she said.

Don Juan demurred, but the girl was firm.

"Well, don't get married till I come home, dear—promise me that? That fellow doesn't deserve you, and you *might* change your mind," he pleaded.

"Very well, I won't marry till you come back; but don't be away too long." And the girl looked at him with a strange expression in her large blue eyes.

"What if I never come back?" he said, laughingly.

Clarice shuddered.

"Then I shall never marry," she said.

"How terrible. To save you from an ignominious spinsterhood I must return, even if it is from another world!"

And so they parted.

* * *

Spring was filling the trees in Hyde Park with little green buds, and the house in Curzon Street was occupied for the season by the beautiful Miss Fernley and her mother.

Up to the door drove a hansom, and out of it stepped a young man.

He had a paper under his arm, and was evidently well known at the house, for the pompous butler admitted him at once and conducted him upstairs to the elegantly furnished drawing-room.

Clarice, a trifle haughtier, and with a more noticeable stamp of that high spirit that had so often led her into trouble, rose languidly and held out her hand.

"How are you, Algy? I did not expect you to-day."

Le Hay kissed her cold and beautiful cheek.

"No; but I had some news to tell you—some news that will, I hope, put an end to this infernal stupidity of yours about delaying our wedding."

The colour rose in a hot wave to the girl's face

"What, Juan?" she said, breathlessly.

"Yes, Heathcote—he's dead!"

The colour faded as quickly as it had come, leaving her whiter than marble. Placing her hand over her heart, she sank down with a quick sob of pain.

"Oh, Algy—how could you? You know my heart is weak," she gasped.

"I'm sorry, dear. But you know how I always hated him, and I did not like him any the better when I heard the absurd promise you had made him about waiting till he came back before you married."

The shock had killed her.

"That was in case I should change my mind," with a momentary return to the old defiant manner, that died away in a spasm of agony.

"A nice thing for me to have to hear. Well, poor fellow, he's dead now."

"You speak as if you were glad."

"I believe I am. He had a horrible death though."

"What did he die of, for oh, I loved him so!" the girl was speaking to herself in a low voice.

Her face was a ghastly white and she was evidently suffering.

Algernon noticed none of this.

"You loved him? This is too much. I *am* glad he's dead now. Fell overboard and the sharks got him!"

Clarice rose from her chair her eyes wild and dilated.

"Sharks? My beautiful boy! Sharks!" And with a shudder she fell forward.

He caught her and laid her on the sofa, and rang for assistance.

Her white lips were stained with a crimson stream that, issuing from her mouth, fell drop by drop upon the ring of rubies that she wore.

The shock had killed her.

ERROLL STANHOPE.

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HIS BRAND OF COURAGE.

BIBLIOTHECA BODLEIANA

TEN of the volunteers of Wrexton had left their village and gone to Southampton, where the transports to South Africa were awaiting them. There had been a fine tumult in the town when they left. Dick Burge, a veteran of the Indian Mutiny, made a speech, flags floated from the buildings, and the local brass band was even more than usually discordant.

Ten pretty girls wept at the departure of their sweethearts. It is true that some of this love was of an impromptu nature. It had not seemed fair to let one of the fellows go away without a sweetheart, and the boys were nothing loath to a ding another emotion to the many which they were experiencing.

It was fine to be a hero and to venture into the strange parts of the world at the bidding of one's country, but it was magnificent to tear one's self from the tearful embraces of a beautiful girl. So all the boys made a point of doing this.

But the prettiest of all the pretty girls of Wrexton was not well satisfied. Her lover had not been one of the heroic ten. He was, indeed, comfortably seated at home, smoking a cigarette on the lawn of his father's place when she came along on her bicycle in the early morning. He saw her, and called out cheerily:

"Are you the early bird, or the early worm?"

But she was not inclined for frivolity. She dismounted and approached the gate with great seriousness of mein, and he threw away the end of his cigarette, and came to meet her at the gate.

"It's a pleasant home you have, Bernard," she said severely. "I don't think there is a pleasanter one in the town."

"Why so serious about it?" laughed Bernard Gray. "I know it's a fine old place, and I like it more than I can say, but——"

"Oh, there's no doubt that you like it!" cried Fanny Lane, her face flushing with sudden anger. "Nothing—not even your duty—can get you away from it."

"Duty?" said he stupidly. "What duty?"

"So you haven't even had a prick of conscience?" stormed Miss Lane.

"When you saw those fellows who have grown up with you going away yesterday, it never stirred you to shame? You can't see any essential difference between their behaviour and yours, I suppose? I always thought of you as being heroic. I don't think I could ever have—have cared for you at all if I hadn't."

"Why, Fanny!" gasped the young man. "You astonish me. Do you think I stayed at home because I was a coward?"

"I don't know why you stayed at home. I only know that I feel ashamed of you."

"But, Fanny, let me try to explain. I have never desired a military life. Only a few wars in the whole history of the world have seemed justifiable to me. I think I should die if I killed a man. I can never get it out of my head that 'Thou shalt not kill' ought to be taken literally. And, really, I would find it easier to be a hangman and execute a criminal, detestable and horrible as such a task would be to me, than to shoot down innocent men, who would probably be engaged in some cause which seemed righteous to them. I firmly believe that war will cease when society becomes more cultivated."

"The finest men in the world have been proud to go to war, Bernard. It never seems to me that a man is quite a man till he has put himself to the test in that way. A man's life doesn't seem completed without such an experience. It's the proof, somehow, of his masculinity. You have not the nature that I thought you had. I don't want to hurt your feelings, but I must own that I am disappointed."

Bernard Gray turned away and looked across the green, well-kept lawn to the house where his white-haired mother sat in front of the French window, reading.

"I suppose I should be more of a man in your eyes if I left her to heart-breaking anxiety," he said, somewhat disdainfully. "You would think me a finer man if I went out and was slain and took from her her last comfort—slain to support an idea which does not particularly appeal to me. I think I am patriotic, but my patriotism is not the sort to be stirred at the sound of a drum. It is deeper when my country is at honourable peace."

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"And what if it were a shameful peace?"

"Then I should wish to see it broken. Then I would help to break it. But it would be a frightful tragedy. And if battlefields are as hideous as they are said to be, I do not know how I could look at one and keep my reason."

"Well," said Fanny, turning away, the hot tears of honest shame in her eyes, "I suppose you cannot help it. You are as you are. But I would rather see you going away to certain death than to think of you as a coward."

The white-haired old lady rose and waved her handkerchief.

"That is the signal that breakfast is ready, Fanny. Won't you come in? Mother will expect you."

"No, thank you. I don't feel like eating. My heart is heavy, Bernard. I'm afraid we have made a mistake. I fear we shall never agree. It's best to find it out now, you know."

Bernard Gray took the soft cap from his head and crushed it viciously in his hands.

"You are hurting me horribly!" he cried. "How can you humiliate me so?"

"I'm sorry, but I speak honestly."

"This afternoon I am coming round to take you driving. That new pair of horses from Cooper's has been sent in, you know. I told you about them. They are a perfect match. You'll ride behind them with me this afternoon, won't you? When I got them I thought only of the pleasure I would have in driving with you."

"Yes, I'll come. I must talk with you, Bernard. I think I am going to tell you something that will sadden both of us."

"You are going to tell me that you no longer love me!" he ejaculated, between closed teeth, leaning over the gate to look into her averted eyes.

"I think I am going to tell you that I am sorry that I love you, and to ask you to forget that we ever made any promise——"

He interrupted her with an angry exclamation. Then, controlling himself, he said, briefly:

"I shall call for you this afternoon," and, after assisting her on her bicycle, he strode up the path to his house.

By the afternoon Fanny had decided that there was no doubt about the mistake. She could never be proud with a temperamental coward. She could not approve of anyone with such a pacific, pusillanimous character. He might apologise for it all he pleased—he talked well.

But his talking made no record of heroic deeds. Such a life as the one he proposed leading would not enrich the annals of a family.

The restless roans kicked up the dust of the summer road, and Fanny could not refuse a glance of admiration at them as she came slowly down the path that afternoon. She had dressed herself soberly for her drive, and her glowing auburn hair and flushed cheeks were the only vivid things about her. Her costume was black, severe, but, like all she wore, with a distinctive style of its own.

"I'll have to ask you to get into the phaeton alone, Fanny," said her lover. "I have not got well acquainted with these boys yet, and they are restless."

She stepped lightly into the vehicle, and the next moment they were dashing down the road. She could not bring herself to speak, and Bernard said nothing.

The country was beautiful with the splendour of the warm spring upon it, and she watched it with appreciative eyes. It seemed as if this swift journey might take her away from the miserable fact confronting her—the fact of her hero's fall.

At the side of the road, two or three miles from the town, was a basket factory, and the young horses, inexperienced in the noises of the world, took great fright at the steam exhaust. In a moment they had become frantic. Bernard Gray stood up and wound the reins several times about his strong young arms. His quieting voice rang out, laden with reassurance, to the terrified creatures.

"Steady, steady, Tom; steady. Jim; whoa, there!"

But with wild tossings of the head, and leaps and swervings, they plunged down the road.

"The harness is new," he managed to say to Fanny. "I think it will hold. Sit still. I am sure I can conquer them. Have confidence, my dear."

But an unexpected thing happened.

In front of a farmhouse which they approached two little children were seen, sitting in the dust of the road, playing, and at the side of the road was a pile of broken bricks. To keep to the road was to kill the children. To turn, was to bring destruction upon the horses, the vehicle, and, probably, the people within it.

"It's the babies or us, Fanny," muttered Bernard, with hard-drawn breath. "Of course, we must take our chances."

"Of course," said Fanny. She shut her eyes. She waited for the end. But it seemed to her that there was a slacking of their velocity. She opened her eyes again, hardly conscious, to find that her companion had actually curbed the horses till they were fairly cowed. A moment more and he had them literally crouching, and the shaft was over the pile of bricks.

Fanny seemed to know what was desired. She leapt from the phaeton, and, picking the children up by their arms slung them out of harm's way, and a few seconds later was back beside her lover.

"No, no," he said, "you should not have come back. The danger is not past."

"I go where you go," she responded. "No matter how far or how wildly you drive, I am going with you, now and always."

The trembling horses regained their feet. Dizzy and bewildered, and dripping with sweat, they went on down the road, Bernard soothing them with his voice.

"You are not going to tell me that dreadful thing, after all?" he found an opportunity to inquire.

"I love you," she responded. "You are a brave man."

S. T. WOOD.

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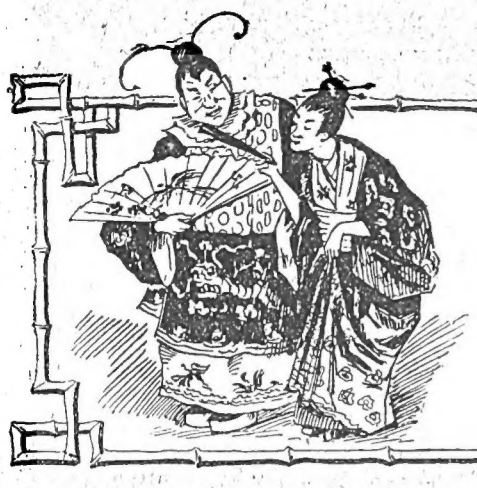

Mr. Bowser's Tribulations.

4.—HE SHOWS MRS. BOWSER HOW TO DO SPRING-CLEANING.

"WOULD you mind if we had breakfast half an hour earlier than usual?" asked Mrs. Bowser the other evening as Mr. Bowser got seated with his cigar and newspaper.

"Of course not. But why?" he queried in reply.

"Well, I thought I'd begin housecleaning to-morrow. I've got two women and a man coming to help me, and I want to get an early start."

"Two women and a man, eh?" he mused as he laid down his paper. "Two women and a man, and it will take you a month."

"Oh, no; I hope to get through in three days."

"In other words, Mrs. Bowser, this house is to be upset from cellar to garret for the next three days in order that a man and two women may loaf about and charge you ten shillings a day apiece for it. That's your way exactly. Great Scott! but I don't believe there's another woman like you on earth!"

"Haven't I got to clean house?" she asked.

"Yes, things have got to be tumbled over once a year, I suppose, but I don't propose to be upset for three or four days nor pay out five pounds in cash. What housecleaning is wanted about here can be done in one hour by the clock, and I'm the person to do it. I want exercise to work off about three pounds of superfluous flesh. I'll change my clothes and be ready in five minutes."

Mr. Bowser had the furniture out of the drawing-room.

"But you—you can't clean house!" pleaded Mrs. Bowser as she barred his way upstairs.

"Just let me go. I've thought of another plan. I'll do it, one room at a time, and all by myself."

"What's the matter that I can't clean house? You watch me now, and see. There's no use for you to spend a week over what I can do in an hour. I'll take the drawing-room first, and you needn't worry."

Mrs. Bowser dropped into a chair with a groan, and Mr. Bowser jumped into an old suit and was downstairs with the stepladder in ten minutes.

The family cat came up from the kitchen and saw him in his shirt sleeves and a grim look on his face, and she quietly slipped under the sofa to be clear of the shower when the splinters began to fly.

"A man and two women, eh? Three days and five pounds expense to clean a house! Kindly keep track of my motions."

And with five twists and a yank Mr. Bowser had the furniture out of the drawing-room into the sitting room. The casters chirruped and the dust flew, and Mrs. Bowser dodged the dancing chairs and made her way upstairs. There were pictures and wall ornaments to come down. It would have taken Mrs. Bowser half a day to remove them, but the time consumed by Mr. Bowser was a little short of twelve minutes. That was a saving of eleven hours and forty-eight minutes to begin with.

In taking the pictures down he grabbed them by the corners and gave a flirt and a twist and snapped wires or hooks and started the moulding from the wall, but he was working against time.

As the last picture came down the corner struck and knocked the nose off of a marble bust of Shakespeare, and Mrs. Bowser called down to know what had happened.

"Nothing—nothing 'tall," replied Mr. Bowser as he picked up the nose and flung it out of the window. "You just keep quiet, and I'll show you how to do spring cleaning. I don't think we'll have to put breakfast ahead of the usual time."

In carrying the ornaments into the sitting room he struck a vase against a chair and shivered it, but the shiver didn't reach Mrs. Bowser, and he had nothing to complain of. The cat purred and grinned as she looked out from her lair.

Things were getting interesting. They got more interesting as Mr. Bowser loaded up with rugs and came staggering in to trip over his own feet and come down on his knees and roll over on the broad of his back.

"I—I thought you had gone through the floor!"

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said Mrs. Bowser as she came hurrying downstairs.

"And suppose I had!" he demanded, as he struggled up. "I'm bossing this job, and if I want to break through the floor that's my business. You see what I've accomplished, don't you? In twenty-two minutes I've done more housecleaning than you and your crowd could have accomplished in three days. Don't come interfering."

The room having been cleared of furniture, the next thing in order was to take up the carpet. Some folks waste time by prying out the tacks, but there is another way, and Mr. Bowser caught on it at once. Having got a corner loosened, he seized the border in both hands and heaved and tugged, and all there was a rip, rip, rip! along the floorboards. All he had to do was to walk round the room and pull away.

Some men would have folded the carpet over and rolled it up when it was free from the floor, but Mr. Bowser didn't. He drew a long breath, wiped the sweat out of his eyes and rushed the carpet together in a heap to resemble a small haystack. As a sort of grand wind up and to reduce the height of the pile he fell on it.

He felt himself going and yelled "Murder."

Two yells and a whoop followed, and the sounds jumped the cat out from under the sofa and brought Mrs. Bowser downstairs on wings. He hadn't meant to yell when he fell foul of the tacks and imagined for a minute that he had kicked over a bumblebee's nest, but he was taken by surprise. However, Mrs. Bowser found him on his feet and struggling to preserve a calm and careless demeanour, and she could only remark:

"It must have been cats fighting in the garden. I see you've got the carpet up. The next thing is to dust the ceiling. I'll get you a feather duster."

When she had handed him the duster and disappeared, Mr. Bowser advanced and kicked that heap of carpet about forty times as hard as he could swing his leg. A hundred tacks had jabbed into him and left smarting wounds, but he felt easier after the kicking. All that was needed now to finish up was to use the duster. He carried the stepladder over to a corner, and mounted it, and began work, and, as he worked, he chuckled.

Mrs. Bowser had figured on standing the house on its head for two or three weeks, but he had got the best of her.

Breakfast and dinner would be served at the usual hours, and he wouldn't have to climb over scrub brooms, mop sticks, and pails of water to get in or out of the house. He was using the duster about as a labourer does a crowbar and flattering himself that the house, would soon go to rack without him when some movement caused the foot of the ladder to slip.

Mr. Bowser let fall the duster and grabbed something but it was too late. He felt himself going, and he yelled "Murder!"

He heard the cat pattering in over the bare floor, and he heard Mrs. Bowser on the stairs, and then he landed somewhere and saw stars and suns and moons dancing before his eyes, and the sound of many wheels going round was in his ears. He wasn't dead. He hadn't even broken a leg. He opened his eyes to find his head and shoulders on the floor and his feet slanting up on the haystack of a carpet. As he lay thus for a moment he heard the cook asking in an awed voice:

"Is he dead at last?"

And Mrs. Bowser's voice was also plain as she answered:

"I don't think so. I think he turned over twice and struck on his back. Keep the cat away while I fan him."

Then Mr. Bowser lost sight of stars and suns and moons, and the sound of wheels died away, and he returned to consciousness and good old England. He took one leg down at a time and then slowly and with becoming dignity stood up and leaned against the wall. The cook withdrew, and the cat stalked away, and Mrs. Bowser was left face to face with whatever might come. It was not long coming.

"I see; I understand!" whispered Mr. Bowser as he nodded his head.

"You—you had a fall."

"Yes, attempted assassination. Who sneaked down here and kicked that stepladder from under me? Who, I say, who, who, who?"

And, pointing the accusing finger of justice at Mrs. Bowser, he slowly and laboriously climbed his way upstairs and left her with her conscience. M. QUAD.

NEXT WEEK: *He turns to Phrenology and finds various bumps and adventures.*

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LOVERS' quarrels are usually regarded—by other people—as comparable with April showers; there is a short and heavy downpour followed with astounding rapidity by bright sunshine. Like the showers, they occur when least expected; the sun is shining brightly at one moment, and the next minute the sky is overcast and down comes the rain.

The quarrels seem to onlookers to have no proper cause, and in many instances this view is quite correct; but to the parties immediately concerned the whole thing is of the highest importance and gravity—a matter of life and death almost. When the quarrel is made up, they may feel that it was not quite as bad as it appeared to them at the time; but it must be remembered that nothing seems so bad when it is past and we are able to look back upon the occurrence with equanimity.

Why Janet Hayes and Albert Saxby wanted to fall out, and make things uncomfortable for the other members of the party at Winstone Grange, on the evening of only the second day after the arrival of the young people composing the party, was a thing which no one else under that roof could understand.

They had been engaged about two months, and were apparently devoted to each other—just a trifle too much so occasionally, perhaps—and a quarrel between them was most unexpected.

It was decidedly inconvenient also, because Janet was a distant relation of Mrs. Winstone and a friend of Madge, the daughter of the hostess, and both mother and daughter had counted upon the assistance of Janet to make the party a success.

And now that this unfortunate difference had arisen between the lovers, Janet's help was minimised; for how could she be so helpful when she declined to speak to one male member of the party, and went about with the consciousness that the affair was known to all the others? It was most provoking, thought Mrs. Winstone and Madge.

"It won't last, my dear," said Mrs. Winstone to her daughter just before luncheon on the following day. "I wouldn't worry about it. Such little tiffs are soon over."

"I don't think it will be over so soon as you imagine, mamma," returned her daughter. "I can't quite make out what Albert did to upset her, but Janet is very angry; and although she is one of the nicest girls you could wish to meet, still she can sulk for a good long time. And fancy spending the rest of the fortnight with those two in that mood! And I fear it may be worse; they are both rather quick-tempered, and the engagement may be broken off."

Mrs. Winstone shook her head with a smile, but Madge continued:

"It would be a pity to mar a man's happiness for some trifling offence, and that is what may happen if the quarrel is not patched up. He has offended Janet in some way—I learnt that much, but I am sure it was something very trivial. He is too good and honourable to——"

Madge stopped to do something and Mrs. Winstone shot a swift glance at her daughter. The guests were coming in, and there was no chance of further conversation.

It was a young people's party. Mrs. Winstone was a widow of independent means who took great pleasure in the society of the younger generation, and she had organised a party of about a dozen young men and maidens to spend a fortnight at the Grange, with the inducement of boating and cycling excursions and amusements of various kinds in a lovely part of the country.

But two more days went past and the quarrel continued.

Some of the more mischievous of the young people had done their best to make things so awkward for the one-time lovers—by leaving them alone together and by arranging matters so that Saxby had to sit next to Janet or take her in to dinner, that it was hoped that the very difficulty of the situation would bring about a reconciliation; but that object had not been attained.

Saxby, finding that Janet would have no more of him, began to pay more attention to Madge. The other young people noticed this, and began to exchange significant glances and, as the attention continued and even increased, to talk about it among themselves.

"If Janet doesn't make it up quickly," said Jack Roberts to Elsie Brand and two or three others, "she will lose Bert Saxby. There was nothing in it, of course; but Janet rides the high horse sometimes. Bert is a high-spirited fellow, and if he gets it into his head that he has been unjustly treated, I'll bet a trifle that he'll have nothing more to do with her."

"And I think, Jack," said Elsie confidentially, about

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ten minutes later when they were alone in the shrubbery, "that we shall soon hear of an engagement between Bert Saxby and Madge Winstone."

"And all because Bert did what he had a perfect right to do and what no girl in her right mind——"

And after that there was a scuffle, and when Elsie had put her hat straight she told him that if he wasn't careful there would be another quarrel in the house.

"Oh, nothing!" said Jack in answer to her inquiry. "He kissed her on the open road and two people just happened to see him. She didn't like it and kicked up a fuss—just for a little thing like that!"

While this was going on, a short conversation was taking place in the house between Bert Saxby and Madge Winstone.

"But I thought you cared for her?" said Madge, looking at him steadily.

"So I—did," returned Saxby shortly.

"So you do, you mean!" insisted Madge quietly. "Why—well if you force me to speak plainly, I must—why don't you patch up this wretched quarrel which is making both of you miserable?"

"I tried, but she rejected my advances," said Saxby, drawing himself up stiffly. "The advance must come from her now; I cannot subject myself to any further indignity."

Later in the day a similar interview took place between Janet and her friend, but the efforts of the peacemaker were in vain. Janet asserted in the most emphatic manner that she had ceased to care for Mr. Albert Saxby, that she didn't care if he married another girl before the week was out, and she had done with him for ever—so there! After that, Madge returned to think it over.

On the following day the guests at Winstone Grange were excited by an occurrence of a different nature, although, by some freak of fate, it concerned one of the parties to the quarrel which had occupied their attention for the last few days.

Jack Roberts possessed a gold watch chain of antique design which had been in his family for about a century and of which he thought a great deal; he usually wore this on special occasions, for it always attracted attention, and Jack was a young man to whom such notice was very pleasant. He had missed this chain, which he kept in a small case, from his room.

Mrs. Winstone was much vexed at the occurrence; her servants were all above suspicion, as she stoutly declared, and she did not think for a moment that the ornament had been taken by one of them.

At first she thought and suggested that Roberts might have lost it in the grounds or in the district somewhere, but this was rather a poor explanation, because the case was also gone. Moreover, Roberts was positive that he had not lost it outside, for the very good reason that he had taken it off and put it into the case after his return, and had worn another chain during the evening. This fact was corroborated by most of the guests.

Jack set great store by this chain, but he concealed his vexation at the loss as much as he could from Mrs. Winstone, as he wished to spare that lady's feelings; but it was a serious matter, he said, and ought to be sifted to the bottom.

A most uncomfortable feeling pervaded the whole assembly of guests, for in cases like this suspicion is likely to fall upon anyone.

Mrs. Winstone said that she hesitated to tell her servants that their rooms and boxes must be examined, but she supposed it would have to be done.

Taking the cue from her, all the young people declared their readiness to let her and Mr. Roberts respectively watch them as they turned out their things, as they did not wish to leave anything undone that would allow a shadow of suspicion to rest upon anyone.

Jack Roberts protested, but in a half-hearted way, that he did not wish to subject any of them to such an ordeal, although it was strange where that chain had gone.

As for poor Mrs. Winstone, she was in a state of great agitation, and heartily wished that she had not given play to her good nature by providing a pleasant holiday for a dozen young people.

Before proceeding to such extremes, the hostess decided to have a careful search made by one of her footmen.

This young fellow was an Italian who had only been in England a fortnight and scarcely knew twenty words of English; he was the son of some worthy people with whom Mrs. Winstone and her daughter had lodged in an Italian village, and who had written to her to ask if she could find a place for the young fellow so that he might have a chance of learning the language.

It was the young fellow's intention to become a courier in due course. Mrs. Winstone had consented, and had resolved that Giuseppe should fill a vacancy that had occurred in her own household.

It was rather difficult to make Giuseppe understand what he had to do, for they knew very little Italian; but by dint of signs, and a language that was a mixture of English, French and Italian, they succeeded fairly well. They called him Joseph; it was the English of his own name and much easier for them to pronounce.

So Joseph was summoned by Mrs. Winstone to a private room, and was made to understand that he was to look for a brown leather case of a certain description, but it is very doubtful whether he understood—or whether the lady of the house even endeavoured to tell him—what were to be the limits of his search.

The hostess went back to the drawing-room where her guests were reading and otherwise trying to pass an uncomfortable time.

It was raining rather heavily, so there was no getting out for the present, but every one of the young people would gladly have risked getting wet in order to escape the ordeal of passing an hour or so together in the drawing-room.

But they were not forced to wait so long as that, for in about ten minutes Joseph re-appeared with the lost leather case in his hand. Everyone uttered either a cry of joy or a sigh of relief, and Jack Roberts took the case from the Italian's hand with many questions as to where he had found it.

Joseph shook his head and turned to Mrs. Winstone, who plied him with questions of her own in the mixed tongue to which she usually had recourse.

"I think there must be some mistake in what he says," said Madge suddenly, before her mother could speak. "He says that he found it under the pillow of Mr. Saxby's bed."

The sudden intrusion of a thunder-bolt would not have caused more consternation. They all knew that Saxby had been anxious to possess the chain, as it matched a necklace owned by his mother; he had offered to purchase it on two or three occasions, the last offer having been made to Roberts in the presence of all the members of the party on the first night of their stay. And now it seemed that his desire had become covetousness, and

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that he had taken secretly that which he could not purchase openly.

Saxby started up when he saw all eyes turned upon him in wonderment and distrust.

"Do you think that I stole the wretched thing?" he exclaimed hotly. "That Italian idiot doesn't know what he is talking about. Here, Roberts, I'll come with you and Joseph and we'll see where he found it."

They went off, but when they returned Saxby was rather crestfallen. It was quite true, Joseph had found it tucked away under the bolster.

"All I can say is," insisted Saxby, almost fiercely, "that I didn't take it. Do you think I did?" he asked, turning suddenly to Roberts.

"We must see what can be done to clear up the matter," interposed Madge Winstone quickly, without giving the hesitating Roberts a chance to reply.

"It's a very awkward affair," said Roberts lamely, looking at Madge and avoiding Saxby's glaring eyes. "I expect we shall clear it up, but the chief thing is that the chain has come back to me."

There was a murmur from the rest of the guests—an indefinite sound which might mean anything but was interpreted as unfavourable to Saxby. Mrs. Winstone was very pale, but she kept silent.

Saxby looked from one to another with a face which now expressed dismay. Did they all believe him guilty? And if so, how on earth was he to clear himself?

"Are you all against me?" he began in uncertain tones. "Do you all think——"

He stopped abruptly, not knowing what to say. Then he felt a small hand slip into his, and Janet's voice sounded close to him, firmly and quietly.

"No, Bertie, I for one do not believe you capable of such a mean, despicable thing! I don't care if all the world believes it and is against you, I'll stand by you. Whatever happens, it will not drive me from your side!"

And Janet clasped his hand tightly and looked round at all present with flashing, defiant eyes.

This was so unexpected that Saxby felt in a whirl, coming as it did on the top of the exciting events of the past few minutes.

Then his heart was filled with the sweetness of having a champion, someone who was prepared to stick to him in the hour of suspicion, and that person the one he loved. Moved by the impulse of the moment he clasped her in his arms and kissed her passionately.

As he released her, Janet's eyes met those of Madge Winstone and she remembered what she had said to her friend only a short time previously. Janet drew herself up and again spoke defiantly.

"Yes, I know I said that I didn't care for him and that I wouldn't have anything more to do with him, but I've changed my mind! A woman wouldn't be worthy of the name of a woman if she didn't stand by a man when he was accused so unjustly, and I'll stand by Bertie even if I have to go to prison with him!"

In her excitement Janet was unconscious of the want of logic in her remarks and her conduct, but her intention was fully evidenced by the tone of determination in her voice.

Madge and Roberts exchanged a swift glance, and then the former spoke again.

"Everyone admires and honours you for what you are doing, Janet dear. I am sure there must be some horrible mistake. Joseph has muddled things, perhaps. I'll speak to him myself quietly."

"It's a dead certainty there's some terrible blunder," said Jack Roberts in a most decided tone. "I'm quite sure that no one ever thought that Bert was capable of such a thing. I didn't, but I was so confused and worried that I don't exactly know what I said."

A murmur of approval came from the others; the sun peeped out at that moment and everything seemed to be brighter.

"I think that you young people had better go out in the open for a little," said Mrs. Winstone, to whom her daughter had whispered a few words. "The wet soon soaks into the sandy paths and you will not find it unpleasant. In the meantime Madge and I will most probably get to the bottom of the matter."

They all appeared to be very glad of the chance to get out of the house. Bertie and Janet were seen strolling together towards a secluded portion of the grounds, and the others all went in the opposite direction.

When they were once more gathered in the house, Madge explained what had occurred. Joseph had been engaged in mending a caster on a heavy chair in Roberts' bedroom—he was a handy young fellow with tools—and had taken up the case to look at it, having been attracted by its antique appearance; but as he was examining it he heard that young gentleman at the door, and in his confusion at the idea of being caught, he slipped it into his pocket.

As Roberts wanted to change his dress, Joseph had to leave, and he felt very uncomfortable at the thought that he might get into trouble for having meddled with the case. He sought the earliest opportunity of replacing it; but he apparently made a mistake in the room, for he went into the chamber occupied by Saxby. Then it occurred to him that the occupant might have missed the case, and if he put it back in the same spot it might lead to detection.

Revolving in his mind the best plan of action, Joseph hit upon the idea—which he had thought an excellent one—of putting it under the bolster; the owner might think that he had placed it there for safety during the night and had forgotten the fact. It was not a grand scheme, but it was the best that Joseph could devise.

When he was asked to search for the case, his conscience smote him. He could not quite understand whether his action was known to Mrs. Winstone or not, and in his anxiety and confusion he fetched the case from its hiding-place and endeavoured to cover himself by a lame explanation how it got there.

This explanation was not properly understood, and the general dismay at the discovery served the purpose of shielding Joseph. All this had been elicited by dint of patient questioning and repetition.

That was the story reported by Madge to her mother and by the latter in turn to the guests. But that Joseph was not the only one concerned was proved by the last of a few remarks which passed between Jack Roberts and Madge Winstone.

"It's all right now," said Madge. "Our little plot worked well, didn't it?"

"Splendidly!" was the reply of Jack Roberts. "It's rather a good thing that Joseph doesn't understand a lot of English. But the end justifies the means in this case."

"Yes, I am very glad," murmured Madge to herself that night in her own room. "I feel dreadfully wicked, but a woman will do anything to render happy the man she loves. And he will be happy with her! I am glad, glad, although——"

A violent, heartrending sob completed the sentence.

G. Williams.

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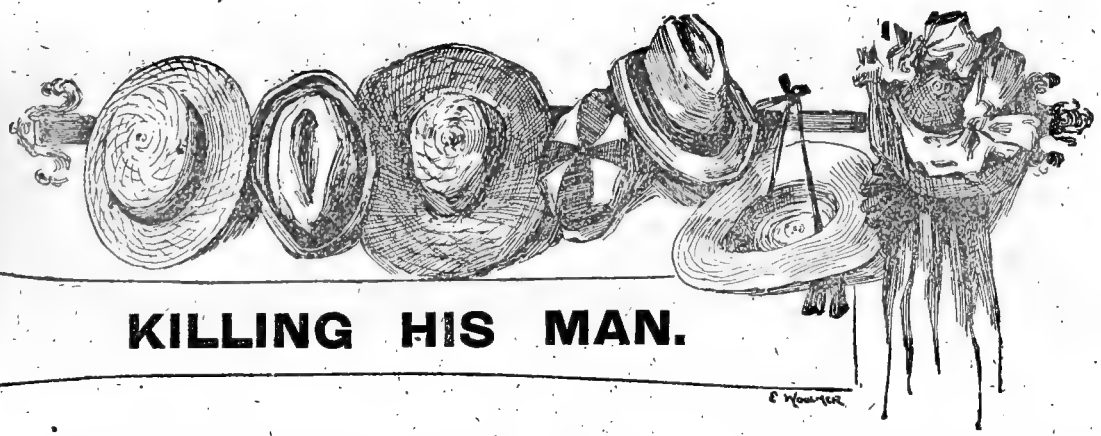

KILLING HIS MAN.

THERE was peace in war—that is, the armies were in winter quarters, with miles of neutral ground between, and except for a little skirmishing along the front there was rest for half a million men. Men had grown weary of marches and battles and killing. They wanted to forget the cries of the wounded and the sight of the dead.

Along the river and forest and over the old fields the pickets on either side stacked their muskets and ignored each other's presence. In the heat of a campaign they would have been sharpshooting at each other—hiding, dodging, ambushing, killing—but now they smoked their pipes or roasted acorns, and read their letters from home as they went on duty.

"Have I ever killed a man?"

Of a sudden, as he lay dozing on his bed in camp one day, Private Hollins asked this question of himself.

He had been in battle and skirmish. He had fired away his forty rounds and fired to kill, but as he began to recall all his battles he could not remember that he had ever had an enemy so near and so fairly before him that his bullet had surely done the work.

There were few soldiers who boasted of taking life. There were sharpshooters who had brought down a dozen men, but they never talked about it.

Men were promoted for desperate fighting, which sometimes meant killing single handed, but they were proud only of the promotion.

It was a curious question Private Hollins asked of himself, and it led to strange results.

He was not a bloodthirsty man, and yet as he lay thinking the idea came to him that he had not done himself justice as a soldier. He had not killed a man.

When the war was over and he had returned home, he would be asked the question.

His friends and neighbours wouldn't be satisfied with his record of battles, but would sweep it aside and say:

"Yes; we know you were in five or six battles and that you fired hundreds of bullets at the enemy, but can you truthfully say you ever brought a man down?"

He couldn't say it, and he felt that he would lose caste. This feeling brought a sudden resolve. It was a resolve that startled him at first, but the more he thought of it the more determined he was to carry it out.

He would kill a man; he would do it next time he went on picket. There were no orders against firing. It was by tacit agreement among the pickets that they refrained.

If he brought one of the enemy down, he would not be reproved even if not praised. He would not boast of the kill to his comrades, but when he reached home, and farmers and their wives and sons sat listening to his stories of war he could answer the question they would be sure to put, and answer in the affirmative.

It was a fortnight before Private Hollins was detailed for picket duty. He was not impatient. He was willing that time should pass, but when the opportunity came he would kill a man. He never wavered in this resolution. There was no exultation at the thought, but neither did its contemplation cause him any qualms of conscience.

"This is your post, Hollins," said the corporal as he left him one afternoon at the edge of a wood under a large oak. "We don't know exactly where the enemy's picket is, but it's somewhere round that log house. However, if you don't get too fresh and go to walking about in the open he won't bother you. There hasn't been a shot fired along here for two weeks. If you go in for roasted acorns, don't make much of a fire."

"To-day I shall kill a man," said Private Hollins as he was left alone, and he began his preparations at once.

At long rifle shot, away across an old cottonfield, was a log house with a few fruit trees standing about it. One might be sure the farmer was off to war and that wife and children, if they had not abandoned the place, were having a miserable existence.

Hollins crept down to the fringe of bushes on his side of the field and peered and watched and waited like an Apache in ambush.

For an hour he saw nothing. Then a gaunt, ill-used dog came among the trees and trotted about in the open in a sneaking, furtive way.

If the dog was there, the house must be inhabited. He had just come to this conclusion when he caught sight of a figure among the trees.

It was between the house and the bushes, where he believed the enemy's picket was lying. It must be the picket on his way to and from the well. Perhaps he had gone to the house to light his pipe or boil his coffee. There was a glimpse and it was gone. Another glimpse, another hiding, and then the figure was fair to view.

It was a long shot, but a pretty fair target, and without an instant's hesitation he drew up his gun and fired. When he looked over the smoke, the figure was gone.

"But I know I hit him, and he's lying dead on the grass," said the soldier as he reloaded his gun. "Now I can tell them at home that I killed a man. Mighty long shot, but I dropped him for certain."

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The dog was still in the open. As the shot rang out he looked back among the trees. As the echoes died away he turned his head towards Hollins and howled dismally. A moment later and the figure of a young girl appeared beside the dog. She was bareheaded, barefooted, and not over eight years old. Hesitating for only a moment, she began advancing across the field.

The smoke from the soldier's musket had located him. The dog followed at her heels, with head and tail down, and with surprise Hollins watched the girl's approach. It took her five minutes to cross the field.

She came straight at him as he stood up among the bushes, and when she reached him she extended her hand and clasped his and said:

"Come along, you!"

He rested his musket against a log and permitted her to lead him out into the open and across the field.

He did not inquire why she had come. He did not ask where she was leading him. Not a question passed his lips, nor did she speak further.

Straight across the field to the trees among which his victim had stood, but long before he got there he saw a form on the grass.

By-and-bye they were close up to it, and the girl let go of his hand and pointed, and said:

"You shot mam!"

It wasn't a man lying dead on the grass, soldier or farmer, but a woman.

The soldier rubbed his eyes and looked around in a dazed way. A boy of ten and a girl of five came out of the house and stood there and looked from the soldier to the dead woman and back.

They spoke no word; they shed no tears. It was true that the enemy's picket post was in the bushes a few rods away. The man on post came out of his hiding. He came walking slowly down, and when he had reached the body there was a gasp in his throat.

He looked round upon the children, looked up at the blue sky as if speaking to God and, with a groan, turned his back on the place and returned to his post.

"Well?" queried Hollins of the children as they continued to stare at him.

They simply pointed to the mother lying dead and uttered no word. The soldier tried to speak again, but he could not.

With face whiter than the one on the grass, with quivering chin and blinded eyes, he made his way slowly across the old field to his post. As he lurched and staggered he heard the dog howl again, but no one fired upon him, no one called to him.

When he reached his post, he sat down on the ground and covered his face with his hands and groaned. An hour later the corporal came with the relief.

Hollins was lying on the ground with arms extended.

"Boys," said the corporal, as he bent over the body, "I'll be hanged if Dan hain't gone and killed himself with his own musket! Who'd ever have thought it of him!"

Up there among the trees, standing about with the awe of death upon them, the children had heard the shot, and as they looked at each other the girl had whispered:

"Perhaps he's dead too!"

F. H. Clements.

Private Leckie's Fiasco.

Cannanore society was in a ferment; the new regiment had arrived, a go-ahead, festively inclined corps; and—*inter alia*—the officers had resuscitated the long disused theatre, which they were to reopen with a series of "variety" performances; to be followed by heavier stuff, as soon as they had gauged the histrionic capabilities of the older residents; those of the gentler sex especially; who, as is usual in all Indian "up-country" stations, were at a premium in this as well as in all other matters.

On opening night one of the "turns" embodied the singing of a parody on "Believe me if all those endearing young charms," entitled "In Dyot Street, Bloomsbury Square;" the singer representing a love-sick servant girl, attired *à la* lodging-house slavey, and armed with a dust pan and long broom. They had had this before at their last station; the character having been sustained by a Captain's wife, but now no longer with the regiment. However, on the present occasion it was to be undertaken by Private Cooper, recently come out with a draft; and who could "sing woman" with wonderful facility. He was a short, smooth-faced young fellow; and as the management committee had not yet been able to complete their "properties," Miss Malcolm, the tallest lady in the place, had volunteered to furnish the necessary habiliments, which, with some alteration, answered the purpose admirably. Cooper's "turn" stood fourth on the programme; but when the stage-manager looked for him, he was not to be found. He had been seen earlier in the evening, but no one could say what had become of him. The management was in a dilemma; the more so, as the whole of Society, headed by the Brigadier Commanding, were present; and the parody was looked on as one of the "hits" of the show. They were about deciding to skip the "turn," when a soldier cam round from the back seats to the green-room door.

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"What do you want?" asked Major Clay, the stage-manager.

"Cooper, sir, be taken bad, and told me as I was to offer to sing his song," replied the man, saluting.

"And can you?" asked Clay, eagerly.

"Yes, sir, I take the women's parts in our own free-and-easies, along with Cooper."

"But do you know this particular song?" asked another.

"Dyot Street, sir? Yes, sir; I've been here when Cooper was a-practisin' it; and I know what to do."

"Good man; Come along—this room—get into your things—there they are, all laid out for that beggar Cooper—we'll call you when it's your time to go on."

Now, this man, a young fellow too, named Leckie, stood six feet three inches in his socks; so, when he arrayed himself in Miss Malcolm's apparel, there showed a good sixteen inches gap where there "hadn't oughter." Therefore, when he issued from his room and appeared before Major Clay and his fellows, they greeted him with a suppressed howl of dismay and amusement.

"Oh, I say that'll never do!" exclaimed Clay.

"Should think not!" added another. "There's been enough murmuring against the theatre as it is; and this would shock them entirely; they'll think it is a ballet!"

"Hang it all! What's to be done?" muttered Clay, "He can't go on like that; the General, for one, wouldn't like it; leave alone the *padre* and his lot."

"No time to cut open the hem, eh?" queried a married officer, examining the skirt.

"Time! Why, hark at them drumming away; he ought to be half thro' his song by now."

Leckie stood grinning; and the *possé* of soldier scene-shifters and helps stood in a group grinning too.

"Deuce take it!" growled Clay.

"I can suggest something, sir," now put in Leckie, instinctively coming to "attention," though laden with his dust pan and broom; a combination so intensely ridiculous that all there went into fits!

Fortunately, the Band Sergeant, who led the orchestra, divining some hitch, had struck up the "Burlesque" galop by way of diversion.

"Out with it!" cried Clay, as soon as he could command his voice.

"The punkah-fringe, sir," pointing to the stage, "take it down, and pin it round me—like a flounce."

A short punkah hung suspended over the stage; a relic of by-gone days, when people held theatricals during the hot weather even. The fringe, a brown holland affair, trimmed with red braid, presented the very thing, and though somewhat incongruous, was just about the right length and breadth, and, moreover ready at hand; it held to the punkah frame by brass hooks and eyes, and consequently was easy of detachment. Instantly grasping the idea, Clay and one or two others sneaked on to the stage—their appearance being greeted with derisive applause—gingerly unhooked the fringe, brought it into the wings, and, by means of the ready-to-hand hooks, as gingerly fastened it to the skirt, and behold the defect was remedied. Leckie went on, and began to sing in right good style.

During the intervals between the verses, he had to indulge in a little *pas seul* by way of aiding zest to the song. Accordingly when he had finished his first stanza, he started to shuffle and pirouette about; but he soon desisted from these antics, and set to sneezing violently!

The audience, believing this was part of the play, applauded and laughed, but when the band sergeant first, then the orchestra, then the first rows, all fell a-sneezing in succession, the whole house was in an uproar from laughing and sneezing combined. Leckie continued "a-tchowing," so did the others: but when Clay and his fellows came on the boards to ascertain the reason for the disturbance, and they—one and all—took to sneezing as well, there was no holding the house; the audience simply shrieked with merriment! Leckie retired as gracefully as he could; but for some minutes the sneezing continued—in the auditorium as well as behind the scenes.

An examination of the punkah fringe threw some light on the mystery; it was found to have been plentifully besprinkled with snuff; and, in due course, the murder came out. Some of the younger officers, concluding that the punkah would have been used during the performance, had peppered it copiously with snuff, as a practical joke on the actors, and with a view to enjoying the fun from their seats half way down. However, they never expected their trick to result in so unqualified a success as it did.

H. Hervey.

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Briton or Boer?

By GEORGE GRIFFITH.

INTRODUCTION.

For years past Britain and the Transvaal have been spoiling for a fight, and it was left to that well-known author, Mr. George Griffith, to write this strong and exciting serial nearly four years ago graphically describing a huge war between the two countries.

The story, coming so soon after the Jameson Raid, was read with unusual interest.

Now that Briton and Boer are in deadly conflict it will be interesting to read the story, and see how far the imagination of the author has actually come true.

CHAPTER XXV.

A Perilous Passage.

Furious as he was at the failure of his mission, and completely mystified as to the means by which such a formidable and perfectly equipped force had sprung into existence in the very heart of the country, and taken possession of its most important railway, Captain Eloff nevertheless saw clearly that it would be madness for him to attempt to fight the armoured trains and the two bodies of horse with the few hundred men that were left to him, so he got them together as well as he could, and, putting himself at their head, with one desperate charge burst through Nesbitt's troop, and got clear away in the direction of Krugersdorp.

"It's a pity that chap got away," said Commander Robertson to Nesbitt, when he overtook the train and made his report, rather shamefacedly, although he had really done everything that could be expected of him, "still, Eloff's a fine fellow, and, personally, I am not very sorry. That was a splendid charge, and he deserved it. And even if you could have stopped him it was better not. We've got all our work cut out at Heidelberg, I hope to Heaven they haven't blown up that bridge across the Vaal. If they have we shall have an awful job of it. Still, we have done very well so far, and mustn't grumble. Ah! there go the guns again. Come on, we must be getting ahead."

The reports of the guns in the distance which had drawn his last remark from Commander Robertson came from the advance train and "No. 1," which were already within striking distance of Heidelberg, and from "No. 2," close in their rear.

A very delicate and difficult piece of work had now to be carried out unless the whole expedition was to be overwhelmed in disaster. A few hundred yards below Heidelberg station a bridge crossed a tributary of the Vaal River. This bridge had to be taken and held at all costs. Meanwhile "No. 3" would be forced to wait until the horse had made its way across country, ridden round the town, and forded the river lower down. The two troops could not take machine-guns or artillery with them, as in that case they would not be able to move fast enough.

It was necessary that they should be able to move with perfect freedom and the utmost rapidity, for it was known that there was a large Commando of some three or four thousand Boers with a detachment of the States Artillery stationed at Heidelberg, and therefore the two troops, if encumbered with artillery and ammunition-waggons, would inevitably be cut off by far superior forces before they reached the river. It was also absolutely essential that they should keep in touch with "No. 3," in order to have the support of the unmounted force and artillery.

It was therefore arranged during the brief consultation before the start that the train should run on at a moderate speed while the horse should make straight for the drift which crosses the river about four miles below the town to the eastward.

By the time they got there the other trains would be keeping the Boers busy and thus give them a chance of getting through the drift and gaining the safe side of the bridge.

"I'll do all I can to help you, boys," said Commander Robertson to the two captains, as he remounted the cab of "No. 3's" leading engine; "but you must depend mostly on yourselves. Don't fight if you can help it. Our business is to get through. We'll have fighting enough at the other end. You'll have a scrimmage at the drift, I daresay, so let the horses get their wind a bit before you reach it; then go for it with a rush. That's your only chance. So-long, now, and good luck to you!"

The two captains waved adieu to the train, the troopers cheered it as it moved off, and then at a sharp trot they headed away southward from the railway across the veld for the drift.

Running at the rate of about thirty miles an hour, half-an-hour's run had brought the advance-train within sight of Heidelberg. A single look ahead through his glasses showed Captain Mellish that Heidelberg was already in arms. The sound of the distant firing up the line had warned the Field Cornet in command that there was something wrong, and that battle was in the air. He saw that there was nothing for it but a rush, so with his own hand he pushed the lever over, and let all the steam at his command into the cylinders. The engine plunged forward, and the train rushed towards Heidelberg station at a speed that would have been utterly reckless under any other circumstances.

Looking out from the engine-cab he saw all the signals simultaneously set against him. Of course, he ignored them, and this told the Boers that, wherever it had come from, the train was a hostile one. He saw a swarm of men rush into the station, and others mounting in hot haste all over the town. Bugles rang out their warning notes, and instinct rather than knowledge told him that this was the

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signal for the artillery to turn out, most probably to shell the bridge.

But what concerned him more than all this during those few rapidly fleeting moments was the sight of a couple of gangs of Kaffirs being hurried by white men down either side of the line towards the bridge. Their object was apparent at a glance, for they had pickaxes, shovels, hammers, and iron bars, and any sort of tool that they could pick up at the moment, in their hands.

Worse than this, too, a much larger gang of them was pushing a couple of trucks out of a siding on to the bridge. There was no time for thought; it was a moment in which instinct pure and simple reigned supreme. He shouted to his stokers to pile the coal into the furnace, and held on his way at a speed of something like fifty miles an hour.

As he thundered into the station he waved his hands to the men in command of the guns, but the unspoken order was needless. They knew what was expected, and just as the Boers in the station and about it sent their first volley at the fast-flying train, the harsh, thudding roar of the Maxims, and the deeper toned banging of the Gatlings rolled out, and the train swept on, vomiting flames and smoke and storms of bullets ahead and astern and on both sides of it.

The Kaffirs who were pushing the trucks scattered like sheep, and ran yelling out of the way. The first of the trucks was half-way on the siding and half-way on the line as the buffer and cow-catcher of the engine struck it. The next moment it was smashed to matchwood, and the one behind it was flung a couple of yards off the metals. Simultaneously the gang of Kaffirs which had been going towards the bridge scattered and vanished over the river banks. The train passed the bridge in safety, but pulled up about three-quarters of a mile lower down.

This was the beginning of one of the strangest fights recorded in the history of warfare. The two great, and, in fact, only dangers to be guarded against were: First, changing the points from the station, which it had not struck the Boers to do, and, second, the destruction of the bridge or displacements of the metals on it. Either would have resulted in utter disaster to the train in the rear of the advance. Hence as each one approached the station, it did so preceded by incessant storms of machine-gun bullets.

"It's over or into it now. Let her go."

When "No. 3" came up some fifteen minutes later, Commander Robertson halted it about eight hundred yards outside the station, and brought every gun he had and every rifle that had a man to fire it to bear on the station and the buildings immediately about it. A very few seconds of this sort of work sent every Boer who was able to get away under cover. "No. 1" and "No. 2" passed the bridge in comparative safety, although the bullet storm through which they had rushed had ended that journey and all others for many a one of their passengers. Then "No. 3" steamed slowly into the station, vomiting shot and shell and hailstorms of rifle-bullets as it advanced.

Just as it neared the bridge a shell burst in the river-bank, flinging up a cloud of dust and dirt. It had come from the higher part of the town, where a twelve-pounder Krupp field-piece had been got into action. This one had done no harm, but the second might strike the platform of the bridge and break it up, or so far dislodge the rails that it would be impossible for the train to pass without plunging into the river.

"Let her go, Jackson—all the steam you've got; throw her right open. It's over or into it now. Let her go!"

As Commander Robertson shouted this to his engine-driver through the roaring of the guns, the hissing of the steam, and the rumble of the wheels, the fire from the town, which had slackened for a moment as the Boers ran for cover, burst out again with redoubled fury. A detachment of the States Artillery, which had got the first field-gun into action, had now run out two more seven-pounders and a three-pounder Maxim-Nordenfelt, and the concentrated fire of the four guns rained upon the bridge as the train made its dash for it.

The wires were cut and the ends hitched on to the rear of the train.

Every man and woman on the trucks and in the carriages held his or her breath as the decisive moment approached. Gradually the engine gathered speed and rushed forward ever faster and faster either to safety on the other side of the bridge or utter ruin in the river-bed. The bridge seemed ablaze with the flashing of the bursting shells and several of the timbers of the bed were alight. Still, to stop was to risk a fate as bad as could befall even if the bridge were to give way, and so Commander Robertson kept the lever over, and the engine thundered on with its living freight behind it.

When it reached the river-bank it was travelling at nearly forty miles an hour, and at that rate it does not take long to traverse a few hundred feet. Yet, brief as the time was, it was almost too long, for even while the last of the trucks with its load of guns and ammunition was in the middle of the bridge, three shells burst almost simultaneously under the pier next to the station. If it had been the pier at the other end the train would never have got over. As it was, rapidly and all as it was moving, it had barely cleared the bridge before the wrecked pier collapsed, and about a fourth of the structure tumbled bodily into the river.

"A jolly narrow squeak that, Jackson! I don't suppose you'll ever want to be in a tighter place," said Commander Robertson to his engine-driver as the train sped on out of the range of the guns, leaving the ruined bridge behind it.

"No, sir, that's about as close as I want anything. A couple of seconds more would have done it—and wouldn't it just have been a smash! But I suppose that's about the last of it, isn't it? We have only got Terblans and Standerton to run through before we come to Volksrust, and we shall be there before any news can get down the line in front of us."

"Yes, that's about it," replied the leader of the forlorn hope which had thus far gone so prosperously. "But still, we may as well make sure of it. I daresay Mellish has got the wires down ahead of us there, but we had better give no chances. Pull up and we'll have one of those posts down."

As soon as the train was brought to a standstill a rope was passed round one of the iron telegraph posts, and made fast to the engine. Then the engine made a spurt and the post bent and snapped. The wires were cut and the ends hitched on to the rear of the train. Then speed was got up

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again, and in a few minutes a couple of miles of posts and wires were dragged down and hopelessly entangled.

"I reckon they won't send any messages down this line for a few weeks to come," said Commander Robertson when he had given the order for the wires to be cast off. "Now, if only Mellish keeps his eyes open, the others ought to be able to run straight through without much hindrance to the border, and then," he went on, "we shall have a chance of fighting another battle of Majuba. I wonder how Nesbitt and Maclure are getting on in the rear. We mustn't leave them without any supports.

They went into the houses and shot from the windows.

"Pull up at the next siding, Jackson, and we'll split the train. The Netherlands engine must take the passengers and join the other trains. They are quite far enough out of harm's way now. Then we'll run back with the guns to Heidelberg, and keep the beggars busy till the horse can get round through the drift and join us. They ought to be pretty near to it by this time."

As has been said in an earlier chapter, there is nothing that the Boers hate and fear more than novelty either in peace or war. This was the first railway fight they had ever seen or even heard of, and when they saw the armoured trains come rushing through the town and the station, scattering a hurricane of shot and shell and bullets on all sides of them, it is only the simple truth to say that they were absolutely panic-stricken.

No one in Heidelberg had the remotest idea of what had happened in the North, or where these novel incarnations of destruction on wheels had come from. They telegraphed wild inquiries up and down the line, but, of course, no answers came back. A hurried council of war was held, at which opinions were hopelessly divided, and the most extravagant suggestions advanced.

Orders had been received only the day before from headquarters to move down on Standerton that day with all the men, horses, and guns with the exception of a garrison of three hundred men, and empty trains would even then be on their way to convey them. At Standerton the forces of all the Southern districts were concentrating for an immediate advance on Volksrust, the frontier station, from whence the march into Natal, over the old battle-grounds of '81, was to be commenced.

How were the orders to be obeyed now that the bridge was down, and how were they to outstrip those terrible trains which would no doubt be doing the same thing at Standerton as they had done at Heidelberg before they could be ten miles on the road to the South? In the midst of a noisy and fruitless discussion of such questions as these the council of war was put a sudden stop to by the news that one of the trains had returned and was about to open fire on the town, and almost immediately after this came a second report that a large body of horse had been sighted to the south-east heading for the drifts on the old transport road.

CHAPTER XXVI.

The Last Rush for Freedom.

Commander Robertson, knowing that everything depended on rapidity of action, lost no time in getting to work. He had got rid of his passengers now and his train was a fighting one pure and simple, armoured from end to end, and filled with guns, ammunition, and armed men. Hence he could afford to take risks which he would not have been just fied in entering upon with several hundred women and children under his charge.

He pulled the train up about six hundred yards from the ruined bridge, on a curve which enabled him to present only the rear end of it to the artillery fire of the enemy. Then he trained his two seven-pounders and the three-pounder Maxim-Nordenfelt on to the "plein" or open space in which the guns of the States Artillery could be seen.

He had about eight hundred men packed into his trucks, all armed with Lee-Metford magazine rifles. These he disembarked and sent down to the river on either side of the line with orders to open and keep up an incessant fire on the town and the station as soon as the first shell was fired from the seven-pounders.

His object was, of course, to keep the Boers in the town so busily engaged that they would have neither heart nor leisure to oppose with any considerable force the passage of the Johannesburg Horse through the drift.

His strategy was perfectly successful. The quick-firing Maxim-Nordenfelt dropped its three-pound mélinite shells so truly and so rapidly about the guns in the plein that their carriages were shattered to bits before the artillerists could get them away. Meanwhile, the seven-pounder shells kept bursting here and there and everywhere about the town, and the moment any considerable number of Boers gathered in the streets or ventured out to take a position along the opposite river-bank, the Maxim spoke, and a brief storm of bullets decimated and dispersed them.

Within ten minutes the town was practically at his mercy. Saving for the fiasco of Doornkop the Boers had never had to face machine gun fire before, and a very little of it went a long way with them. Two or three times the streets that were open to the line of fire were swept, and then they went into the houses and contented themselves with shooting from such windows as looked out towards the train.

As soon as he saw that this was the case, Commander Robertson detached three hundred men and sent them down to the drift to assist the passage of the horse. He also got out a light Maxim, which had not been mounted, and which four men could easily carry with its tripod-stand, and sent it down with a score of boxes of ammunition. About a thousand of the Boers had ridden out on the other side of the town with the object of cutting the Johannesburghers off from the drift, but so much time had been wasted in panic and divided councils that the two troops were already within half a mile of the drift and the three hundred riflemen and the Maxim were in position before they could strike an effective blow.

As they rode out of the town in a fairly dense body the Maxim got on to them at two thousand yards, and the moment the range was found a brief torrent of bullets was poured into the midst of them. When the Maxim stopped Captains Nesbitt and Maclure took the hint, poured in a volley, and charged in two divisions.

The Boers, believing, not without reason, that they had ridden into a trap, scattered like sheep, and made the best of their way back into the town, followed by a second volley from the rifles and another brief tornado from the Maxim. Then the two troops drew up again and rode laughing and cheering into the water, and cleared the drift without losing a man or a horse.

The Maxim was picked up, and horse and foot started at a run and a trot for the train. The other squad of riflemen was recalled by a whistle from the engine, and the disgusted and discomfited Boers had the satisfaction of seeing their strange and terrible assailants disappear round the curve on their way to do no one knew what damage in the South.

Commandant Meyer stamped and stormed with rage, but it was impossible to do anything until more guns could be brought down. Even if he could have persuaded his

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The bridge seemed ablaze with the flashing of the bursting shells.

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thoroughly demoralised men to cross the river and pursue the train on horseback the only result would have been destruction, for without cover on the open veld they would never have got within half a mile of the muzzles of the machine-guns, so all he could do was to send mounted messengers to the North to convey the tidings of swift and incomprehensible disaster, and await further orders and reinforcements of artillery from headquarters.

Commandant Meyer stamped and stormed with rage.

By nightfall the train and the two troops of horses reached Terblans without further adventure. They found the town and station already in possession of "No. 1" and "No. 2," and, to the Commander's great delight, they also found on the sidings the two empty trains of trucks which had been sent up from Standerton to bring down the men and guns from Heidelberg. As rapidly as it could be done the wearied horses and men of the two troops were put into the trucks after the former had been watered and fed as well as the resources of the temporarily captured town would allow.

While this was being done a council of war had been held and a very pretty little scheme for outwitting the enemy at Standerton had been evolved. Considering the large number of Boers concentrated there and the fact that the Vaal River is crossed to the south of the town by a long bridge which could be very easily blown up before the now lengthy procession of trains could get over, it was decided to risk everything on the success of a single stratagem.

Given that the line was clear, the bridge intact, and the Boer commanders unsuspicious, it would be possible to rush the station and cross the bridge before the trick was discovered. Consequently a telegram was dispatched in Dutch to Colonel and Commandant Lukas Meyer, brother of the Commandant at Heidelberg, as though it had come from him at that station:

"Imperative orders received from Commandant-General, Pretoria, to proceed at once with all speed to frontier. Large numbers of English troops landed at Durban and coming up to Charlestown. Obeying these orders, I shall pass through Standerton to Volksrust without stopping, taking all available men and guns with me. Please have line clear, that there may be no interruption. Am ordered to ask you to follow as soon as possible to join in general attack on Charlestown to-morrow."

Meanwhile the engines were taking in water and coal, and everything was being got ready for the last rush of the strange journey, and as each train was ready, it moved out of the station in the same order as before. The telegraph office, of course, had been already seized, but as a further precaut on the wires were pulled down before "No. 3" left to bring up the rear.

It is about forty miles by rail from Terblans to Standerton, and a little over eighty to Volksrust. The iron horses were kept well in hand until the lights of Standerton station, which lies at some little distance above the town, were sighted across the wide, open grass veld. To the delight of the commander, the green lights said "all clear." The stratagem had worked so far. Three short, sharp whistles gave the signal "full speed" to the other engine-drivers; the trains quickened up one after the other, and, with about two hundred yards interval between each of them, rushed down the slight incline at a speed which soon reached nearly fifty miles an hour.

Meanwhile two men on the rear truck of "No. 3" were busily fitting detonators and fuses to two twelve-pound boxes of dynamite.

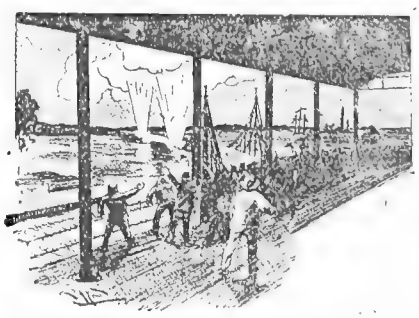
As the advance-train rushed, with its whistle screaming, through the station, those on board it saw the platform crowded with people, who raised a hoarse cheer as they passed. It vanished into the darkness beyond. Another and another and another rushed after it, and then came "No. 3." As the rear truck reached the end of the bridge the boxes of dynamite, which were now hanging over the end of the truck by ropes, with fuses already lighted, were let go.

"No. 3" vanished after the rest. All had passed, as it were, in the twinkling of an eye. The Boers had stood and watched the six trains roar through the station without the remotest suspicion of the truth. It was too dark and the speed was too great for them to see anything more than that the trains were composite and that some of them were armed and loaded with men and horses.

But as the roar of their wheels was dying away in the distance they saw two brilliant flashes of flame blaze out in the middle of the bridge. At the same instant there came the crash of an explosion which convulsed the atmosphere about them, and smashed every window in the station. They saw the dim shape of the bridge twist up and collapse, apparently just in its centre, and when some of them ran out into the darkness to see what had happened, they found only a contorted mass of rent and twisted rails and girders, and a wide, black gap, under which the yellow waters of the rain-swollen Vaal were roaring and surging in an impassible torrent.

Then it began to dawn upon them that something very strange had happened, and that some incomprehensible disaster had befallen them. Commandant Meyer, half beside himself with rage and bewilderment, telegraphed to his brother at Heidelberg, and then flashed a warning down to Volksrust, but, of course, no answer came back, for by that time the wires were already down in both directions.

By a strange coincidence the events which have just been narrated took place on the day and night of the 2nd of January, that is to say, on the anniversary of Doornkop, and simultaneously with the rout of Commandant Cronje's men at Buluwayo, and his surrender to General Carrington's column at Figtree Fort, on the road to the Mangwe Pass. It was shortly after sundown on the same memorable day that a mounted messenger from Buluwayo overtook the column, and handed the General a lengthy telegram from Salisbury, conveying the startling but welcome information that communication with Chimoyo had been suddenly restored, and that Her Majesty's ships *Edgar* and *Grafton*, convoying the two big Bucknall liners, *Johannesburg* and *Fort Salisbury*, filled with Imperial troops and stores, had arrived at Beira from Delagoa Bay.



They saw two brilliant flashes of flame blaze out in the middle of the bridge.

The Imperial troops, including a battalion of the Leicestershire Regiment under Captain Pearson, four companies of Mounted Infantry, and a detachment of the York and Lancaster Regiment under Colonel Alderson, with a strong

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naval brigade with light artillery, machine guns, and ample stores, had been landed, and would push on to Umtali with all practicable speed, and would march from thence on Buluwayo or Fort Victoria, as might be found most advisable, after receipt of advices from him. Then followed a succinct account of what had happened in Delagoa Bay, and the telegram concluded with the hope that the Matabele campaign would be concluded by the time the two columns joined hands and started southward to attack the Boers.

The delight that this good news awoke in the breast of every Loyalist who had been fighting so well and so long for the honour of the flag in Rhodesia may be easily imagined, and great were the rejoicings that night all along the road from Buluwayo to Mangwe.

General Carrington at once dictated a reply to the dispatch, requesting that the troops should proceed direct to Buluwayo. The railway from Mafeking had been completed as far as Palapye, and ample supplies for the rainy season had been got up before the wires were cut, so there had been abundance of food in the North for a month past. Hence there need be no fears of scarcity even when the other column arrived.

The General and his assistant officers made their dispositions for the next campaign with their usual decision and dispatch. All the serviceable horses that the Boer prisoners had left were promptly appropriated. So many as were wanted were taken as remounts for the troops, and the rest were sent on up the road to Gwelo to meet the coming column and help it along.

Commandant Cronje and his men were sent off well guarded to the South, and, to their intense disgust, were set to work, some as bullock drivers and transport-riders, and others as labourers on the line. It was, of course, impossible to send them back into the Transvaal, and it was equally unreasonable to allow them to eat their heads off in idleness. When Commandant Cronje protested against the indignity, he was curtly reminded of the fact that he had made *his* prisoners at Potchefstroom work in the trenches after he knew that an armistice had been concluded, and that hostilities were at an end.

The greater part of the column then moved southward, and within a week they had reached Palapye, where General Carrington formed an entrenched camp, in which he had decided to await the arrival of the column from the North before resuming the offensive, and either striking straight at the Transvaal through Fort Elebi, or moving down in force on Mafeking to retake the railway and join hands with the Cape Colonial forces.

CHAPTER XXVII.

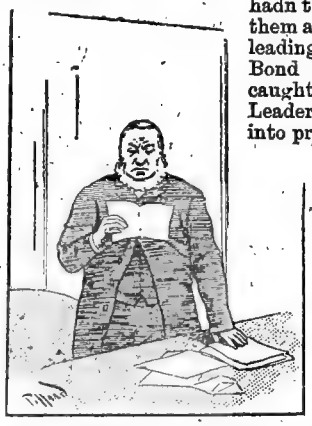
BOERS IN COUNCIL.

A FORTNIGHT had passed since the strange, and, as it appeared to those most interested in it, almost miraculous, exodus of the Johannesburgers from the ruins of the Golden City, and a full month had gone by since the carefully hatched conspiracy between the Boers and the disloyal Dutch of the British colonies had been brought to a head by the proclamation of President Krüger on Independence Day.

According to all prophesies and calculations, which had been very freely, and in fact openly, made since the Transvaal and the Free State had begun to arm themselves after the Jameson raid, the British ought, by this time, to have been swept into the sea or reduced to the position of the Outlanders of Johannesburg, and the new flag of the United States of South Africa ought to have been flying from the flagstaff on Government House at Cape Town.

The good unsophisticated burghers, most of whom remembered the easy triumphs of the War of Independence, and who had taught their sons to look upon fighting the English as rather easier sport than shooting buck, were beginning to ask their leaders very awkward questions.

How was it that most of the shooting that had been done had been on the other side? Why had the English been allowed to rush through their country on trains that were like forts on wheels, and which spread death and destruction all about them and wrecked all the bridges behind them? What had become of the Commando that had gone into the North under Pieter Cronje to take Rhodesia for the Transvaal and hang Cecil Rhodes on the nearest tree? Why hadn't the Free State risen with them at first; and why had all the leading members of the Africander Bond allowed themselves to be caught as easily as the Reform Leaders had been and clapped into prison?



The President was at the end of a long table.

These questions and a good many others like them the good burghers found very much easier to ask than the President and his Executive, including even the astute State Secretary himself, found them to answer. There were nearly thirty thousand burghers under arms in the Transvaal alone. The re-organised States Artillery to the number of three thousand, of whom at least a thousand had served in the German army, was as efficient as drill, manœuvring, expensive equipment, and new uniforms could make it. They had plenty of guns and immense stores of ammunition, and yet the war, which by this time ought to have been over, had apparently only just begun.

It had been confidently said in the highest quarters that fifty thousand British soldiers would only make a nice breakfast for the Boers. Why had they not come, and why were the Boers still hungering for their breakfast?

To the unsophisticated minds of the simple burghers these were very hard questions indeed, but to their rulers they were not quite so obscure. In fact, the new year was hardly a fortnight old when the answers to some of them at least began to make themselves unpleasantly plain, as we shall presently see if we take the liberty of being present in the spirit at a Council of State which was held in the Executive Chamber at Pretoria on the evening of the 15th of January.

The President was at the end of a long table. Opposite to him was Vice President and Commandant-General Piet Joubert, at the President's right sat the State Secretary, handsome as ever, but scarcely so *débonnaire* as he had been at the ball at the Rand Club; and in other armchairs round the table sat some half-dozen other men of light and leading in the councils of Boerland.

There was Gert Johannes van Niekerk, a thick-set, handsome man, with a long, dark beard slightly streaked with grey, a well-moulded nose, and bright, dark eyes. In his day he had been a doughty raider like Jameson, and had made himself President of Stellaland until Sir Charles Warren came and turned him out. Now he was Chief Commissioner of Police, a son-in-law of Oom Paul, and one of his most trusted advisers.

Next to him sat Lukas Meyer, known as the Lion of Vryheid, a magnificent man standing some six feet four in his boots, with thick, black hair and beard, and looking his name every inch of him. Opposite to them sat Lieutenant-Colonel Henning Pretorious, Commandant of Artillery, a well-built, dark-faced, grizzled man. Next to him sat, facing the State Secretary, no less a personage than Prince Paul Regna himself, his slight, perfectly attired form and keen, high-bred features forming a contrast to the heavily

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built, carelessly-attired Boer councillors, as strange as the fact of his presence in the room.

What was he of all men doing there?

The answer is very simple. The capture of the Russian squadron in Delagoa Bay, the sudden and complete stoppage of all communication between the Transvaal and the outside world, and the wholly unexpected events that had taken place in the interior during the last three weeks or so had convinced him that the policy which he had come to the Transvaal to pursue would have to be entirely changed.

He had, therefore, removed about half of the diplomatic mask from his countenance; in other words, he had shown the State Secretary his credentials from the Court of Petersburg, and such of his instructions as would suffice to lead that astute if somewhat inexperienced diplomatist to believe that Russia, through him, was prepared to step into the place left vacant by Germany, who, as it appeared, had never sent her fleet at all, and had manifestly backed out of the secret alliance the moment that it was a case of expending men and money, and risking European complications for the sake of the freedom of the Transvaal. This the State Secretary had communicated to his colleagues of the Executive, and the present council had been convened mainly, if not wholly, to consider this new development.

At the time that we may suppose ourselves to have entered the room, they had been considering it for some two or three hours, at far greater length than it could possibly be set down here; but in the result Prince Paul had so astounded them by the amazing knowledge which he evidently possessed of the inmost intricacies of European diplomacy, including all of their own affairs which they thought most secret, that they had ended by taking him at his own valuation, and accepting the offers of moral and material aid which, as he assured them, his Imperial master had commanded him to make, should the course of events render such a step advisable.

This done, the Council proceeded to the discussion of internal affairs, and on the Prince offering to withdraw, the State Secretary had suggested that he should favour them by remaining and helping them, should occasion offer, with his deeper knowledge and wider experience.

Meyer replied by making the table jump with a blow from his huge fist.

The first subject that came up was the disquieting news which had just come in from the North, and was not yet known save to the Council, and, it may be added, to the Prince. It had come in the form of a letter from General Carrington, containing an enclosure from Commandant Cronje. The letter was dated from "The British camp, Palapye," and had been brought across country by three of the Boers who had been taken prisoners at the Figtree Fort. Many rumours had come in, but this, from the hands of the enemy, was the first precise account of the disaster that had befallen the Northern Commando. The General drily and tersely put the facts in such a way that there was not the slightest possibility of mistaking his meaning. He was in deadly earnest, and evidently intended to push the advantage he had gained to the uttermost.

He began by stating that the men who were now his prisoners had entered Her Majesty's dominions without any declaration of war in a time of peace. That they had taken the lives of British subjects, and destroyed or confiscated their property. He had, therefore, decided to hold them as hostages for the safety of the unarmed British subjects in the Transvaal. He would exchange them against twice their number of British subjects of whom at least half must be women and children, and who must be conducted to the frontier of the Portuguese territory and handed over to the British officer in command there, so that they might be conveyed by sea to the south. Failing this he would keep them as labourers at such work as they could earn their keep by till the end of the war.

The enclosure from Commandant Cronje drew a pitiable picture of the free-born burghers being forced to labour like Kaffirs, and strongly urged the exchange.

When the President had finished reading the letters he dashed them down upon the table and cried in a voice thick with passion:

"Soh! we are to make terms with these accursed *rooineks* already, are we? Our burghers have let them take them prisoners and we are to give women and children for them. That is not the way we did in '80 and 81. *We* took the prisoners and made the terms then. No, let them stop and work if they did not know how to fight. *Allermacht!* we want men who can fight. What say you, Piet Joubert?"

The Vice-President stroked his white beard and looked for a moment or two at nothingness out of his keen, cunning eyes. Then he said:

"No. Let the men come back. They can ride and they can shoot. There are more than a thousand of them. We shall want them, and we are better without the women and children. What do you think, Van Niekerk? Is that not so?"

"*Ja*, that is so," said the Commissioner of Police, slowly. "*Ja*, we want the men, Oom Paul. We have not done well so far, and this is not going to be a business like '81. Our men do not shoot as straight as they did then, and the *rooineks* shoot straighter. They have learnt many things, too, since then—more than our people have. See how they got through Meyer's men at Standerton. Ei, that was a slim trick!"

The Lion's face flushed dusky red at this allusion to an exceedingly sore subject. The amenities of European diplomacy are not very strictly observed in Pretoria, and Lukas Meyer replied by making the table jump with a blow from his huge fist and saying in a tone that was almost a shout:

"Slim trick! *Groot Gott!* What about the trick the *rooineks* played you here? What were you doing while they got out of Johannesburg—stole your trains and blew up Elandsfontein? What were they doing at Germiston and Heidelberg——"

"Soh, soh, softly, softly!" said the President, suddenly interrupting. His own gust of passion had passed now, and he obviously wanted no words wasted in re-crimination.

"Let me speak; I have been thinking. We must crush this Carrington, or he will pierce our side from the west; we must break him before he grows too strong. These men who brought the letter shall take another back, telling Carrington that we will do as he says, and that we are even now sending the women and children to Delagoa. And they shall tell Cronje that we are sending him an escort of five thousand burghers with artillery and maxims to bring him back.

"We have the railway to Shoshong, only fifty miles away from them, and we have plenty of men on the border. Then we must rouse the Free Staters and the burghers of the Cape, and we will take Fourteen Streams while they attack Kimberley. We have talked too much and fought too little; now we will begin to fight—and we will fight, fight, fight as long as there is a *rooinek* or a *rooibaatje* in the land.

"I have told Steyn that the English are fortifying

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Amajuba and Laing's Nek, and have closed the Passes of the Drakensberg, and are giving the Basutos arms and stirring them up to invade his country and slaughter his people, and he has answered that the Free State burghers will move when we move, and when they move those who are faithful to us in the Cape will move, too. So now we will move, *ja*, every one of us, for this business must be finished before more men come from England and other places."

"I don't think there is very much fear of that, your Honour," said Doctor Loyds, when the President had finished his little harangue. "For the present at least England is absolutely crippled; she dare not send another regiment or a single ship. Is not that so, Prince?"

"England," said the Prince, addressing the President in wonderfully fluent Dutch, "is at present so far involved in complications both in Europe and elsewhere that your Honour need have no fear of any English intervention for at least six months.

"If," he went on with a note of polite sarcasm in his tone, "we were dealing with the England of Pitt or Palmerston, or even of Beaconsfield, it might be different. If the Concert of the Powers had presented their joint Note, intimating that if the South African Question were made an Imperial one and the might of the Empire were used to crush the Republics and cancel the promises made after Amajuba, to the England of those days she would have flung her glove in the face of Europe and fought the world before she would have submitted. But the England of these days, or at any rate, its Government—well, gentlemen, no one should know better than you how accommodating that Government can be."

"If we were dealing with the England of Pitt or Palmerston, or even of Beaconsfield, it might be different."

"*Ja!*" said the President with a gruff laugh. "If I could only get a message to Chamberlain I would make him take that Carrington and all the Government *rooibaatjes* away and call the ships home, and after that the work would be easy."

(*To be continued.*)

KRUGER WON'T LAUGH

. . When our Guns are Trained on Pretoria!

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SHORT STORIES ABOUT PEOPLE.

We devote, every week, two pages of *Short Stories* to pithy, humourous anecdotes similar to those which appear in these columns. A prize of £1 1s. will be sent to the reader who submits the best storyette this week, and a copy of "Three Men and Mr. Frank Caldwell," by W. Pett Ridge, to each of those whose attempts are used. The anecdotes may be either original or selected; in the latter case the source *must* be stated. The prize of One Guinea offered for the best Storyette in this competition has been won this week by Mr. A. Butterfield, 31 Manchester Road, Nelson, Lancashire. Attempts for this week's prize may deal with ANY SUBJECT and must reach the Storyette Editor, *Short Stories* Office, Henrietta Street, Strand, London, W.C., by Monday, May 7th. Post-cards only, please.

His Reminder.

IN the counting-house of a certain city office, usually closed at six o'clock, the office boy—not a new one, either—has been known, like others of his fraternity, to occasionally forget to do those things which he ought to have done, and the manager at last had to impress upon him the advisability of making a note of anything important on a memorandum form and keeping it in a conspicuous place on his desk as a reminder.

The other day a piece of paper was noticed pinned to the wall in front of the lad's desk, and upon examination, it was found to bear the following:

"Memorandum. Leave at six."

A. B.

Kismet and Fate.

A LADY living in a fashionable quarter has a bit of statuary bearing the inscription "Kismet."

The housemaid was dusting the room one day, when her mistress came in.

"Shure, madam, what's the maning of the 'riting on the bottom of this?" asked the maid, referring to the inscription on the statue.

"Kismet means 'fate.'" replied the mistress.

Bridget was limping painfully when out with her sweetheart not long afterwards, and he asked:

"What's the matter, Bridget?"

"Faith," was the answer, "I have the most terrible korns on me kismet." F. T. D.

The Ghost's Moustache.

SCIENTISTS say that the hair and nails grow after death. Some theory of that sort is needed to explain the experience of a widow at a spiritualistic séance.

"No," said the little widow emphatically. "I will never attend another dark séance."

"Why not?" asked her friend. "Didn't you have any acquaintances among the spooks?"

"I am in doubt about the materialisations."

"Not distinct enough?"

"Well, it was like this: The medium said my husband was there, and wanted to speak to me. It was too dark to see him plainly, but I thought I recognised the outlines of Jim, and I kissed him."

"Was it Jim?"

"That's what I would like to know."

"What makes you doubt it?"

"The spook had a lovely moustache."

"Oh!"

"Jim never had one." And the little widow looked thoughtful. A. T. B.

So Sorry!

AT an evening party lately, the hostess had bustled out of the room to arrange some detail of supper or something. During her absence a young man, who had protested all the evening, sang a sentimental ballad—to the intense agony of the company.

The hostess returned after he had finished, and knew nothing about his singing. As he had to leave early, he approached to make his farewell.

"Good-night!" said the hostess, with the usual excess of amiability. "Good-night! I'm so sorry you can't sing."

The young man crimsoned and fled.

A. H.

Wild Behind.

A CONSCIENTIOUS sportsman purchased a mule that was warranted sound and quiet.

He rose from the ground very shortly afterwards with the severest reasons for doubting the latter qualifications.

"You said the mule was quite tame," the buyer observed.

"And so he is tame, isn't he?" asked the dealer.

"Not altogether—only partially so," the discontented purchaser replied; "he is tame in front, I daresay, but he is desperately wild behind." M. L.

Turned the Tables.

A WELL-KNOWN professor sometimes becomes so much interested in his lecture that the class is kept about a quarter of an hour over the proper time.

Certain restless spirits amongst the students once thought they would give him a gentle hint, so they bought an alarm-clock, set it to go off precisely at noon, and placed it on the professor's desk when they came in to the next lecture. They knew that he was a little absent-minded, and expected that he would not notice it.

As the noon hour struck the alarm went off with a crash, and those of the class not in the secret started and took in the joke at once. There was a round of applause.

The professor waited till the alarm and applause were over, and then said:

"Gentlemen, I thank you for this little gift. I had forgotten it was my birthday. An alarm-clock is something my wife has needed for a long time for our servant, whose nocturnal slumbers are rather heavy. It is a very kind remembrance on your part."

The professor then finished his demonstration.

J. W. K.

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Drilled with Poles.

At a certain Board school in the North of England the children had been moved from the infants into Standard I., and were being, for the first time, drilled with music.

The teacher showed them what they had to do, and the children commenced to do it accompanied by the piano.

However, they had not got far in the exercise when they stopped, many of them bursting with laughter.

"Whatever is the matter?" ejaculated the teacher, "have you never drilled with music before?"

"No, sir," replied one of the boys, "please, sir, we drilled with poles."

J. N.

At it Yet.

One Sunday the minister of a small northern country parish church had the misfortune to forget his sermon, and did not discover his loss till he reached the church.

Suddenly an idea struck him.

He sent for John, the beadle, and told him to give out the 119th psalm (containing 176 verses), whilst he hurried home for his sermon.

On his journey back to church he saw the faithful beadle standing at the church door waving his arms and shouting at him. On reaching the door, he exclaimed:

"Are they all singing yet, John?"

"Ay, sir," replied John, "they're at it yet, but they're cheepin' like sparries."

T. S.

Legal Repartee.

A certain doctor had occasion, when only a beginner in the medical profession, to attend a trial as a witness. The opposing counsel, in cross-examining the young physician, made several sarcastic remarks, doubting the ability of so young a man to understand his business. Finally he asked:

"Do you know the symptoms of concussion of the brain?"

"I do," replied the doctor.

"Well," continued the attorney, "suppose my learned friend, Mr. Baging, and myself were to bang our heads together, should we get concussion of the brain?"

"Your learned friend, Mr. Baging, might," said the doctor.

W. L. T.

Not So Slow There, Either.

Down in the country the other day, I took a vehicle at a country station to ride inland a few miles. The driver was disposed to be quite communicative.

"You don't live round here, I s'pose?" he remarked interrogatively.

"No—not now," I replied. "I'm from London."

"Pretty big place, ain't it?" he continued.

"Yes, it's a large city," I said.

"I s'pose there's something goin' on there most of the time, ain't there?" he asked.

I nodded affirmatively.

"Well, we ain't so slow down here," he added. "Had a dance in the village schools last night, and there'll be a school treat Tuesday!"

J. W. N.

A Desperate Debtor.

Many years ago a man carried to a bank in the Midlands that had recently failed, some bills which it had issued, and demanded gold and silver for them. The cashier replied that the bank did not pay gold and silver.

"Give me, then," said he, "notes of the Bank of England."

"We have none."

"Then give me bills on any bank in England."

"We have none of them."

The man, growing desperate, exclaimed:

"Pay me, then, in the best counterfeit bills you have!"

H. K.

Quite Ready.

Presence of mind is not always monopolised by the brave and wise, nor is it uniformly cultivated for great and good purposes.

Several of the pupils in a certain small private school determined that the study of geography was as unnecessary as it was irksome. The teacher, however, differed on this point, and accordingly called one of the eldest boys to his desk and spoke to him about the necessity of a knowledge of his own and other countries.

"I shan't learn g'ography till I'm ready," growled the youngster.

The teacher rose quickly and seized him by the collar, intending to shake him, when the young rascal hastily added:

"But I'm quite ready now."

T. A. V.

Is It a Pleasure to Do Nothing?

A clever boy, afterwards a celebrated barrister, was in his school-days both lazy and insubordinate. The masters were all in despair, and the cause was laid before the superior. He called the boy to his room and said:

"My lad, you do not like to work; would you really like to do nothing?"

"Indeed I should," said the boy. "I hate work."

"Very well," said the superior, "you can stay in my room and do nothing—mind, absolutely nothing."

For an hour and a half the lazy boy enjoyed the rest, then he put out his hand for a book.

"Oh, no," said the superior; "reading is doing something—you must not read."

Another half hour passed, then Master Berryer began to talk.

"Oh, no," said the superior; "talking is doing something—you cannot talk."

At the end of three hours the superior left his desk and went into the grounds. The boy followed him, and, seeing his companions playing at the distance, he was about to join them.

"Oh, no," said the superior; "playing is doing something—you must not play, and indeed, you ought not to be here, for walking is doing something, so you must not walk."

Master Berryer was conquered, and from henceforth there were no complaints of him in the school, and in his future life he was certainly not one of those who did nothing.

R. W. M.

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The Reward of Knight Errantry.

EVERYBODY knew that Mrs. Martin had a powerful and romantic imagination, and that was what led many of her friends and acquaintances to say that they believe the whole thing to be an offspring of that imagination.

They said this among themselves and they were careful not to allow Mrs. Martin to know that they said it; for, although she was undeniably romantic, it was not fair to accuse her of romancing.

But here is the whole story, and when you have read it you can judge for yourselves.

Martin was sitting in his arm chair rather late one evening, moodily smoking a cigar. His wife had been away on a two days' visit to some friends at Guildford and was to return that evening, but she had omitted to let her husband know by which train she would arrive at Waterloo and he was consequently obliged to wait in uncertainty at home for her arrival.

He was getting fidgety and gnawing the end of his cigar rather angrily, when he heard a ring at the bell.

Before he could remove his feet from the inside of the fender and get to the door, the maid had answered the ring and Mrs. Martin had bustled into the room, narrowly escaping her beloved husband as she pushed open the door.

"Oh!" Mrs. Martin emitted a little scream as she nearly collided with her husband. "I'm so dreadfully nervous to-night, John. I've had such an adventure!"

She permitted herself to fall heavily into a chair and drop her bag on the floor.

John sat down in his own chair and looked at her anxiously.

"Take off your things, dear, and tell me all about it. Now, don't give way!" he went on as Elaine showed signs of lapsing into a swoon. "Brace yourself up a little, my dear, and have a glass of wine. What has happened?"

Elaine recovered her self-possession by an effort and proceeded to divest herself of her outdoor garments and to fortify her nerves by a glass of wine. By the time these preliminaries had been concluded, she was in a sufficiently calm condition to narrate what had happened.

"I didn't wish to trouble you to meet me, John," she began, "so I said nothing about the time the train would arrive—and to tell you the truth, I really didn't know what time I should start; Julia never will let me come away till the last minute, and the dear children——"

"Did it happen down at Guildford?" interrupted John who had not the same enthusiastic opinion of the "dear children," and wanted his wife to get to the point.

"No, John," returned Elaine, a little stiffly. "It was after I had left Waterloo and was finding my way to Charing Cross District Station. I can't think why on earth you say that it is easier to go over Hungerford Bridge—it's much more simple to go some other way; I always have a trouble over it and so to-night I lost my way and goodness knows where I got to.

"I hadn't the slightest notion that I was going wrong, and I was just thinking what a darling boy Willie is growing, when two men sprang out upon me in a dark street. One man tried to grab my bag, and the other—the wretch!"

"He did?" exclaimed John, half rising from his seat.

"Yes, my dear, he actually tried to kiss me! But I made a scratch at his face with one hand and kept a tight hold on my bag with the other. And then he came up."

"Who?" demanded John, dropping back into his chair.

"A handsome, well-dressed young fellow about twenty-five, John," continued Mrs. Martin warmly. "I don't know where he came from, but in about two seconds he had knocked one of the ruffians flat on the ground and was shaking the life out of the other one. And he did it all in the most polite way you could imagine, John. He stood on the prostrate rascal, held the other tightly by the collar and took off his hat to me.

"'Shall I give them in charge, madam?' he asked me deferentially. 'If you charge them, you will have to appear at the police court to prosecute and that may be distasteful to you. Or shall I give them both a good shaking and let them go?'

"Of course, I did not like the idea of appearing in a police court, so I told him to let them go. He bowed in the most gentlemanly manner, got off the fallen man, lifted him up by his collar—still holding the other, then gave them a good kick and told them to run. They did run.

"I was very much flurried and didn't know which way to turn to get to the station. I set off in the opposite direction—that is, John, I was just going back to Waterloo. He noticed this and asked me—just like a

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knight of old—if he could assist me by pointing out the right way to reach my destination. Of course I accepted his chivalrous offer and he told me which way to go.

"'If you will permit me, madam,' he said politely—you have no idea, John, how exceedingly polite he was—'I will walk a few feet behind you. I am going to the station myself and shall be able to see that you reach it safely.'

"I allowed him to do so and he kept three or four yards behind me; I know this because I had a look at him out of the corner of my eye whenever I turned from one street to another. At last we reached the bridge and he came a little nearer to me. When we were on the other side, he spoke to me again and cautioned me to be careful how I descended the steps as they were rather slippery. He suggested with the utmost deference that I should lean upon his arm; and as I did nearly slip on the steps, John, dear, I was glad of his assistance. On arriving at the booking-office he took off his hat, bowed profoundly and took leave.

"I was more than thankful, I can tell you, when I found myself in the train and on my way home. Wasn't that an adventure?"

"H'm!" was John's only reply.

Perhaps it was because he still had his cigar in his mouth. But Elaine was not well pleased and the conversation fell rather flat during the remainder of the evening. In fact, beyond saying that he was glad she had come to no harm, John did not again refer to the subject.

The next morning Mr. John Martin left for the office about nine o'clock as usual. He lighted a cigar and it seemed that his gloves gave him a lot of trouble to put on. Then, he had to hold his umbrella also.

Probably it was due to this combination of circumstances that he made no reply to his wife's remarks as she accompanied him to the door.

Elaine appeared to have recovered from the annoyance she had felt on the previous evening at her husband's reception of the news, and she talked volubly about the paper she intended to read before the local Literary Society on "Modern Chivalry."

"I think I shall have time to write that paper to-day, dear," she rattled on as she walked round him to see if there were any mud spots or dust which had not been brushed off. "I think that adventure of mine yesterday evening will serve as a splendid opening. If ever there was an instance of modern chivalry, that was one. Don't you think so?"

The dust seemed to get into John's throat, for he coughed and did not reply.

"You don't seem to think so, John," went on Elaine, again feeling a little hurt. "But I suppose it is too much to expect of all men. You wouldn't do anything of that kind."

And for the first time since their marriage they parted without the morning kiss.

Mrs. Martin had several things to attend to during the morning and it was not till the afternoon that she had time to begin her paper on "Modern Chivalry."

The opening sentences gave her a little trouble, but as soon as she began the narration of her adventure she warmed to the work and her pen went swiftly over the foolscap.

As she wrote, she fancied that she could hear the murmurs of applause that would come from her audience—especially from the ladies, and when she laid down her pen with a sigh of satisfaction she was convinced that the reading of that essay would do a great deal to [illegible]

Seven o'clock was John's time for reaching home and it was seldom that he was late; occasionally some business matter would detain him, but he generally knew of this on the previous day and gave his wife due notice.

On the evening in question she confidently expected him at the regular time, but no John appeared. She concluded that by some mischance he had lost the train, which would make him half an hour late.

Twenty minutes passed, and to while away the time she took her essay and began to read it through. As she proceeded, certain improvements occurred to her and she marked them with a pencil; when she had finished her perusal of "Modern Chivalry" she was surprised to find that it was eight o'clock.

She began to feel uneasy; it was early spring and the evenings were long and dark, and as this particular evening was misty, she began to wonder whether it had been foggy in the City and whether John had met with any accident while crossing a crowded thoroughfare.

Half past eight and still no John. It was getting serious. The dinner was really spoilt and Elaine could bear it no longer. John's sister lived across the road and her husband often came home with John; she therefore resolved to look them up and see if Mr. Parkes had seen anything of her husband.

She reached the door at the same time as a telegraph messenger. The door was opened by Parkes himself, who greeted her rather absently and told her "Emily is inside," while he tore open the envelope. Mrs. Martin, however, remained in the hall waiting till he had read the message.

"Is it about John?" she asked when he had dismissed the telegraph boy.

"Er—yes," stammered Parkes rather confusedly. "I must go back to Charing Cross, Elaine; got to do a little deal with John—very urgent. Ought to have thought of that! Must tell Emily I'm off. You'll excuse me, won't you?"

He ran into the dining-room and reappeared in the hall before Elaine had time to think. Hastily putting on his hat and coat, he was about to pass her when she stopped him and asked:

"John is all right, isn't he, Henry?"

"Bless you, I believe so! Excuse me, just got time to catch the train."

He was off; and after saying a few words to her sister-in-law Elaine returned home.

She felt rather angry with John for having forgotten to tell her that he would be late and she was cross with Henry for he had evidently forgotten an appointment with her husband. Yet that wasn't like Henry; he was so methodical.

It was about half-past ten when she heard someone open the street door with a key. It could only be John.

She went into the hall with mixed feelings to meet him.

There was a good light in the hall; that was one of the things that John insisted upon—he said that he wanted the place to appear as though its inmates were alive. Thanks to the bright light she was able to discern her husband's condition.

One sleeve of his overcoat was entirely gone and the other seemed to be tearing itself away from him, for it hung half detached from the body of the garment. There were sundry holes in his clothes, varying in size from a mince pie to half-a-crown; his face was spotted with blood that came from a bruised eyebrow; a necktie with the knot at the back of the neck, and the fragments of a collar completed a most disreputable

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appearance. He had no hat, and Mrs. Martin, amidst all her bewilderment, vaguely wondered what had become of the glossy guinea tile.

"Good gracious, John, whatever is the matter?" asked Mrs. Martin, her arms dropping listlessly by her sides.

"Modern chivalry!" was John's reply as he slipped off what remained of his overcoat and stalked into the dining room closely followed by Elaine.

"But what—?" began Elaine. And then she stopped helplessly.

The first thing that caught John's eye was the essay on "Modern Chivalry." He seized it, took out the paper fastener with grim deliberation, laid the sheets along the floor one at a time, and then calmly walked all over them with the muddy boots which he had forgotten to wipe on the mat. After this, he gathered up the sheets with a running sweep of the hand, placed them on the burning coal and trod them down into the fire with his heel, savagely, without in the least heeding his wife's frantic appeal.

"Now sit down there," he commanded, pointing to a chair as he sat down in another.

His wife obeyed in astonishment.

"Look here," he continued, mopping his bleeding eyebrow and unconsciously wiping his face with his handkerchief, thereby giving himself a most startling appearance, "You take it from me that that modern chivalry business is a fraud. Elaine, I'm going to call you Ellen from this minute; that other name is a great deal too romantic, and romanticism doesn't pay in these days, at least, the romantic person gets paid in a manner he doesn't like."

He paused for breath and Mrs. Martin endeavoured to get a word in.

"But, John dear, what is the matter?"

"Matter?" roared John. "Isn't the matter plain enough—can't you see me? You'll drop your membership of the Literary Society from now, Ellen. Have you renewed your subscription to Mudie's? Well, you'll write and tell 'em that the doctor says no more novels are to come into this house—if he dosen't say so, I'll make him!"

"But, John——"

"You belong to several societies, don't you? Give 'em all up! No more modern chivalry in this house; it's the biggest fraud of the century!"

Then John was obliged to pause and Mrs. Martin contrived to soothe him a little and induced him to tell her what had taken place.

"I was detained unexpectedly at the office, so missed my usual train," began John.

It was not easy to talk with a cigar in his mouth, especially as one of his front teeth had left him during the evening, but he made a fairly creditable performance.

"I stayed a few minutes at the office as I did not care to hang about the station, and then I set off.

"I generally take the quiet streets on purpose. As I was going along I saw a young woman in front of me; she turned down a street which had no thoroughfare, so I concluded that she was going to the Charing Cross District Station and had taken a wrong turning. If she were not going to that station, where was she going?

"Then I thought of the modern chivalry business and I went after her and told her that she had mistaken her way. She didn't seem to appreciate my attention, and turned abruptly in another direction; but I was full of the chivalry notion and decided to keep a few feet behind her to see that she came to no harm—just as that fellow did for you.

"She didn't go straight to the station. I knew that I should miss my train, but I supposed you wouldn't mind that when you heard that I was acting the part of a knight of old, so I continued to see that she came to no harm."

"Of course, John dear; you wouldn't be my husband if you didn't help a lady in distress."

"Just so," continued John. "We hadn't gone very far when two fellows rushed out of a dark corner; one tried to get her bag and the other tried to kiss her."

"And you went to her assistance?" said Elaine decisively.

"Certainly! I did the modern chivalry trick. But it didn't act this time as it ought to have done. The two men set upon me, and the lady in distress clutched me by the collar and pulled one way while they pulled the other, all three of them shouting for the police. I pitched into the two men, and we fell on the ground, leaving my collar in the hands of the fair lady. We prodded at each other and got generally mixed up in the mud of the gutter. Then up came two bobbies.

"The men in blue didn't stop to make inquiries, but joined in the prodding, only they had the best of it because they were standing up and we three were on the ground. Finally another policeman came up, and then they pulled us up from the ground and dragged us off to the police station. The lady followed in tears."

John had to have a little wine at this juncture.

"When we got to the station and the sergeant asked the charge, we all spoke at once and it would have puzzled a phonograph to have recorded that charge. After a while the sergeant managed to quiet us and ask the foremost bobby what was wrong. But, bless you, he couldn't tell; he had been attracted to the spot by a brawl and that was all he could say. Then he turned to the lady, and, to my surprise, she said:

"'That wretch'—yes, my dear, she meant *me*!—'followed me and made an unprovoked attack on these two gentlemen, my father and my husband. He ought to have five years' penal servitude.'

"Well, Ellen, the long and the short of it is that I was put in a cell and had to wire to Harry to come and bail me out. In the morning I am to appear at Bow Street and I shall be lucky if I get off with a fine. Now, if you don't promise me that you'll drop all these new-fangled ideas about chivalry I'll go to South Africa to-morrow and get killed. It won't work now-a-days, I tell you. Will you promise?"

And she promised.

G. Day.

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MR. WAGSTAFF'S POULTRY TEASER.

MR. JETHRO WAGSTAFF recently made up his mind that this year he would have a successful garden. That is, he meant that his seeds should come up naturally, and not through the medium of his neighbour's hens, as they did last year.

To sit on the step all day and watch the garden, stone in hand, to discourage any itinerant Brahma from commencing operations, would be altogether too monotonous and tiring for a man so fond of variety as Mr. Jethro Wagstaff. He was afraid his neighbours might be provoked if he shot their fowls, and desisted from setting his dog on them because he knew the dog would damage the beds quite as much, if not more, than the chickens themselves.

He knew that it would do no good to have the hens' wings cut, for nothing short of cutting a hen through the neck causes flowers to thrive and grow properly. So Mr. Wagstaff allowed himself to become engrossed with the idea of inventing some simple contrivance for the hen who is always ready to scrape an acquaintance with your flower beds.

After a time he hit on a plan of filling a piece of board with holes, like a cribbage-board, and setting in each hole a lucifer match with the head up. This he intended to place in the garden, and sprinkle earth over it, and let the hen go to work.

A day or two after he had one of these articles perfected, and placed it in the garden, concealed by soft soil that would invite the most indifferent hen to come in and scratch.

Then he left the gate open and went into the house, where he could see what took place through the blinds without being observed by the besieging bipeds.

In a few moments a large Cochin China hen wandered in, and was attracted by the fresh earth. After a prelude of jubilant cackle at getting in unobserved, and at the prospect of having a flower-bed all to herself, the old Cochin China jumped on to the soft spot, landing on both feet. It was a blissful moment for Mr. Wagstaff. It was likewise a blissful moment for the hen, for, as she drove both feet deep into the earth, she struck a match that immediately ignited the others, and, before the hen could realise the situation, or even guess at it, she was treated to a firework display.

"Oh, this is lovely!" observed Mr. Wagstaff, as the family all pounded him on the back to relieve him of the hysterics which had so suddenly prostrated him. "Oh, wasn't it funny," said Mr. Wagstaff, "to see the expression of surprise that came over the hen, and sort of shook her confidence in herself and everything else."

They all agreed it was; and Mr. Wagstaff was just in the act of drinking some water when his boy called out:

"Here comes that big Dorking of Maginley's!"

Mr. Wagstaff was at the window in a moment, and, sure enough, there was Maginley's big fowl. The light and airy gait showed that he was feeling at peace with all the world, and that he was just in the humour for having a little fun.

It was all that the little Wagstaff could do to replace the burned matches with good ones and sprinkle a little earth over them in time.

Then the big bird stepped up as proudly as though he were called before the curtain. He was majestic and grand in his strut and general demeanour, while his feathers shone like a military uniform.

Mr. and Mrs. Wagstaff sat at the window, and the little Wagstaffs clambered on chairs to get a glimpse of Maginley's rooster.

That eminent bird lost no time in getting on the particular spot intended for his reception. He fairly danced on the matches, and filled the air with dust. The matches went off, and before the Maginley bird knew what was the matter, his feathers took fire, and as he flew across the garden in the dust, with a tail of fire about fifty feet behind him, an amateur astronomer thought he had discovered a comet, and sent a full account to the local paper.

Wagstaff's Hen-Teaser has just been patented, and it is safe to say that Wagstaff will not be troubled by his neighbour's poultry any more for some time to come.

F. FLOOD.

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PEARSON'S New Morning Paper.

The Daily Express 1D. 1/2

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THE PAPER FOR SOCIETY GOSSIP.

PEARSON'S New Morning Paper.

The Daily Express 1D. 1/2

THE PAPER FOR THE TEA TABLE.

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THE BRAIN GYMNASIUM

In these competitions a prize of £2 will be awarded each week to the competitor whose attempt we receive giving the correct solutions of all the puzzles. If more than one is absolutely correct the prize of £2 will be given to the first correct attempt dealt with.

If no lists of absolutely correct solutions are sent in the first prize will be awarded to the competitor whose attempt is first dealt with showing the fewest mistakes.

Each week we shall award in addition to the above, either ten of our silver plated pencil-cases or ten popular six shilling novels to be distributed amongst the competitors whose attempts are absolutely correct and have failed to win the first prize, or, if no complete lists of correct solutions are received, to those whose attempts show the fewest mistakes.

Write all your solutions on one sheet of paper, putting the number against each. Post the batch in an envelope marked "Brain Gymnasium," to reach the Editor, Short Stories, 18 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, W.C., by first post on Monday, May 14th, 1900.

No. 106.

Show how a life "double as long" is "also begun old."

No. 107.

Make a symmetrical sentence about "Pears' Soap," using each letter twice.

No. 108.

What place in Africa is formed by the contraction of "a boy's name," "the young of a tiger," read backwards, and three-quarters of "an instrument"?

No. 109.

LI—NO—HE—ST—AR—SS—EC—RS—OL—AT—MO—ON—NC.

Re-arrange the above groups of letters so that a familiar adage can be read.

No. 110.

O	F	R	I		R	C	H	I
E	C	O	N	B	Y	N	C	L
C	S	E	T	H	D	H	A	D
E	I	H	T		L	O	H	E

Commencing at a corner letter, and proceeding one letter at a time, but not diagonally, read the name of a well-known poem, the name of its author, and the name of a character in one of his other works.

No. 111.

A biting wind and blinding rain,
A night of mire and slush,
As ready for the omnibus
I make a frantic rush.

My LAST, my LAST—conductor LAST!
I cry with all my might.
My FIRST and more the man replies,
Then vanishes from sight.

Though strange it seems while reading this,
My WHOLE'S before your eyes,
And, even as I now conclude,
My WHOLE I utilise.

RESULT OF BRAIN GYMNASIUM.

Nos. 82 to 87.

The prize of £2 has been awarded this week to Mrs. Frances A. Gardner, of 1 Langdon Place, Swansea, whose solution was the first correct one dealt with.

Each of the following has been awarded a copy of "The Lost Provinces," by Louis Tracy:

John G. Usher, Baltinglass, co. Wicklow.
T. Williamson, Cheapside, Peterhead.
S. G. Harrison, 51 Madeley Road, Ealing, W.
E. Forsdike, 161A Kilburn Lane, Queen's Park, N.W.
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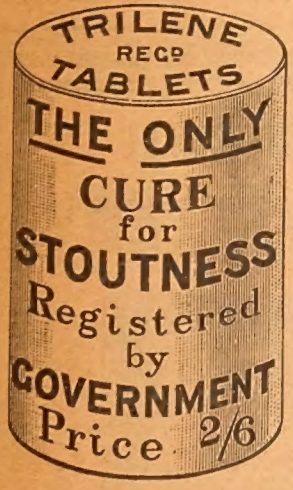

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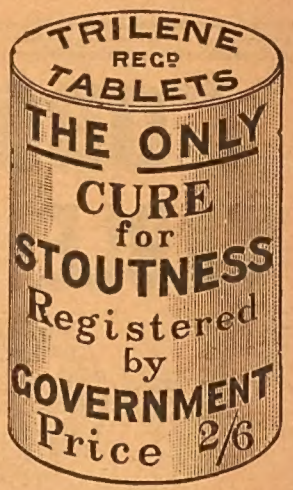

SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

"87 Alexandra Road, Norwich, October 19th, 1896.

'Gentlemen,—In reference to Trilene Tablets, I may say that my wife found the greatest possible benefit from the use of them; their action was rapid, and exceeded our utmost expectations, as they were also most beneficial to the respiratory organs. My wife was many years growing so stout, but although the disease was, I consider chronic, the Tablets soon reduced the same completely. You have our united thanks, and if I can do anything to promote your interests I will freely use my utmost endeavours to do so.

"Yours faithfully, J. R. CANHAM."

Mrs. DARNLEY SMITH, Landscove Vicarage, Ashburton, writes: "Trilene Tablets have reduced my weight very much. I am so much lighter in every way, and better in health."

COUNTESS SECKENDORFF, of Berlin, writes: "The Tablets greatly benefited me personally, and I am recommending them to friends."

Miss CHATTERTON, 7 Salisbury Villas, Banstead, Surrey, says: "I weighed 12st. 8lb., but am now 11st. and getting much better."

Nurse CROUCHER, at Mrs. Bennett's, 14 Buckleigh Road, Streatham, says: "I lost 9lb. from the box I took."

"77 Hindhill Street, Heywood, February 5th, 1898.

"Gentlemen,—I have not quite finished the box of Tablets and am 2lb. lighter. The change is great, and several friends are beginning the treatment, which not only reduces fat but strengthens rheumatic joints—such has been the case with me. "Yours sincerely, M. A. HEYWOOD."

Mrs. D. BURTON, of Silverleigh, Tunbridge, writes: "I am very pleased with difference in size, my friends all telling me how much thinner I am getting."

Miss NORTHLEDGE, The Laurels, Rischolme Road, Lincoln, says: "The Tablets reduced me 1st., so that I am cured."

West Cornforth, Ferryhill.

Mr. WM. USHER says: "A sister of mine, who was 17st., was greatly reduced by your Tablets to 13st."

Extract from *The Lady*, September 3rd, 1896: "Many stout persons have suffered untold agonies in unavailing efforts to reduce their bulk, either by means of severe dieting, or by taking more or less deleterious drugs; but all these pains would have been saved if the had only invested in a box of the wonderful Trilene Tablets which are quite harmless, containing neither mercury, arsenic, nor any other mineral poison, and which are an unfailing cure for obesity."

FATHER T. M. BYRNE, of Holy Cross Abbey, Sligo, writes: "When I began your Tablets I was 12st. 5lb.; I now scale at 10st. 11lb.—my case, too, is hereditary."

Mrs. T. BOSTON, Cambridge Villas, Clifford Street, South Wigston, says: "I congratulate you on your wonderful Tablets. My weight at first starting them was 11st. 7lb., and I now weigh 9st. 11lb."

Mr. MCLEOD, 44, Calside, Paisley, writes: "I have been cured. If you want to know my weight now, it is 10st.; reduced 1st. 8lb., and I am quite content."

A. M. PRATT of Ongar House, Ongar, says: "My weight is so much reduced it is unnecessary to ake more. The reduction of weight was from 12st. 6lb. to 10st. 4lb."

Mrs. WHITEHOUSE, of Poplar Avenue, Edgbaston, writes: "My husband is in splendid health, and has lost 15lb. in weight since taking the Tablets; I am sure I thank you on his account."

Mrs. H. COX, 28 Watnall Road, Hucknall Torkard, writes: "The box of Tablets has reduced my weight 1½ stones."

Mr. WALKER, 238 London Road, Hazelgrove, Stockport, says: "I have used one box and am 14lb. lighter. Send another soon as possible."

Col.-Sergt. WHITTLE, of East Lancashire Regt., Burnley, Lancs, says: "A man in our regiment in 1891 lost several stone from taking your Tablets."

Mr. BUTLER, Surgeon, M.R.C.V.S., of Hampton Manor, Evesham, says: "My patient has lost 1st. in weight whilst taking your Tablets."

Mrs E. ALEXANDER, 102 Dixon Street, New Swindon, says: "They have reduced me quite 2 stone, and I am now quite cured."

Mrs. W. A. RADFORD, of High Street, New Brinsley, Eastwood, writes: "Before taking Tablets I was 46 inches round waist, now I am 32 inches. I hope soon to be 23. I could hardly move or get up, now I get about easily. Please use this as you wish."

Countess FURSTENBERG, of Germany, writes: "They act speedily and well."

The Princess LIECHTENSTEIN writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send me your excellent Tablets."

Mrs. WEAVER, of Greenpits Villa, Ross, Hereford, writes "I am reduced from 13st. 8lb. to 11st. You may use this if you like."

Mrs. CROSSLEY, of Rose Hill, Torver nr Coniston, says: "There is a very decided diminution of fat. I am delighted, and cannot speak too highly in praise of Tablets. My heart is better, and I can breathe so much easier. You may refer to me as often as you like."

Lady C. CONRAD writes from Wiesbaden: "I am very pleased with your Tablets."

Mrs. TAYLOR-ROBINSON, of Tweed Green House, Whalley Range, Manchester, says: "I feel so much lighter and better since taking your Tablets, and am so much thinner that I hardly recognise myself."

Miss A. LONG, of 9 South Parade, Waterford, writes: "Your Tablets have reduced me 14lb."

Miss A. DAWSON, 62 Orchard Street, Weston-super-Mare, says: "Glad to say the Tablets have sufficiently reduced me. I shall always recommend them."

THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION, 66 FINSBURY PAVEMENT, LONDON.

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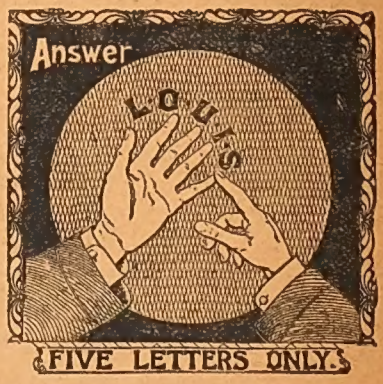

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